

Exploring intercultural interactions on a university campus through the lens of a local
student: a multidimensional, multi-theoretical analysis

by

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Abstract

Modern-day universities are sites of unprecedented levels of cultural diversity, thus affording plentiful opportunities for intercultural interactions to occur. However, research from nations across the sector consistently suggests a pattern of limited intercultural contact among students on university campuses. Further, there is emerging evidence that this pattern is heightened among local students, with research suggesting that local students are less likely to engage in intercultural interactions than their international peers. The implications of this limited contact are concerning, suggesting that many local students are being denied the cognitive, affective and educational benefits that intercultural interactions can generate. However, the issue also raises a broader question: why, in a climate of unprecedented levels of cultural diversity and global mobility, are intercultural interactions on campus constrained in their frequency and depth?

Using a variety of qualitative methods and theoretical lenses, this research provides insight into how local students conceptualise, perceive and experience intercultural interactions on an Australian university campus. Participants were first-year students (n=27) representing a range of academic disciplines. Students were recruited for the study at the beginning of the academic year and participated in two semi-structured interviews (at the beginning and the end of their first study period) in which students' subjective accounts of their intercultural interaction experiences were elicited.

The use of several conceptual lenses (including cultural identity, ethnorelativism and ethnocentrism, cultural awareness, structure and agency, and context) and theoretical paradigms (including Bourdieu's Social Field Theory, Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory, Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory and Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development) not only provided different views into the data, but different ways of seeing it, ensuring fine-grained, nuanced insight into the many and varied ways students perceived, understood and ultimately experienced intercultural interactions. Further, the development of a theoretically-informed and inductively-generated coding framework allowed the systematic and rigorous analysis of students' accounts of their positive intercultural interactions across affective, behavioural and cognitive dimensions including agency, self-disclosure, duration, contexts, and cultural interest.

Positive intercultural interactions were revealed to be complex, multidimensional, and situated phenomena shaped by numerous, layered and often competing intrapersonal and structural dimensions. The findings highlighted the criticality of students' cultural awareness and understandings in shaping intercultural interaction outcomes. Students who demonstrated

higher levels of cultural awareness and ethnorelativist understanding were found to experience interactions at deeper levels of experience than students displaying lower levels of cultural awareness, and ethnocentric understanding. While the research highlighted the potential of transformative intercultural interactions to foster intercultural growth and cultural awareness, its related finding that students who entered an intercultural interaction possessing high levels of cultural awareness were more likely to benefit from intercultural interactions than students possessing low levels was noteworthy. Nuanced insights into the role of student agency (operationalised as the initiation of an intercultural interaction) in mediating intercultural interaction outcomes were also revealed, the findings suggesting that deep level intercultural interactions and intercultural transformation could still occur when agency was not exercised, provided other dimensions were present in the interaction. Related, a student's failure to exercise agency may not necessarily reflect a lack of interest in culture and diversity, but could suggest contextual factors. Finally, the simultaneous adoption of two ethnic identity theoretical lenses in the analysis of students' accounts allowed systematic relationships between how students conceptualised and understood their ethnic identity, and the depth at which they experienced an interaction, to be revealed.

From a higher education perspective, the findings of this research suggest that the cultural frames and understandings that students bring to university campuses might not simply mediate their intercultural interaction experiences, but also reinforce and perpetuate their existing levels of cultural understanding, thereby possibly constraining their intercultural growth. Related, institutional policies and practices vis-à-vis pedagogy and curriculum were also found to militate against meaningful intercultural interactions and intercultural learning, with this research highlighting the need for higher education institutions to engage in systemic and systematic curriculum and pedagogical redesign to effect changed frames of cultural awareness. Institutions could also consider broadening the range of academic, linguistic, social and cultural capitals that are valued on their campuses so that they are more representative and inclusive of the cultural diversity that is present in its learning and teaching structures, this potentially affording intercultural interactions.

Acknowledgments

It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end.

Ernest Hemingway

And as for so many students who have walked the PhD path before me, what a profound journey it has been. Challenging, liberating, inspiring. A period of reflection and growth, and ultimately, a privilege.

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Table of Contents

Declaration.....	2
Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgments.....	5
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research, Literature Review and Research Aims	10
Preamble	10
Introduction.....	17
Mediators of Intercultural Interactions	19
Research Aims	27
Chapter 2: Methodological Issues.....	31
Introduction.....	31
Methodology (and its Inherent Dualisms)	32
Method.....	40
Chapter 3: An Overview of the Empirical Papers	46
Paper 1	46
Paper 2	50
Paper 3	54
Paper 4	58
Chapter 4: Discussion	65
Introduction.....	65
Conceptual and Methodological Contributions	66
Empirical Contributions.....	69
Limitations and Future Research Directions.....	77
References.....	82
Appendix A: Empirical Paper 1	101

Local university students and intercultural interactions: conceptualising culture, seeing diversity and experiencing interactions.	102
Introduction.....	102
Intercultural Interactions and the Local Student.....	103
Intercultural Interaction and the First-Year Student	104
Research Questions	105
Methodology	105
Findings.....	108
Discussion	116
Conclusion	118
References.....	119
Appendix B: Empirical Paper 2	123
Intercultural interactions of mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students in small group learning activities: a Bourdieusian analysis.	124
Introduction.....	124
Bourdieu's Social Field Theory	126
Applying social field theory to intercultural interactions on campus.	127
Research Aims and Questions	128
Methodology	128
Findings.....	130
Habitus as a Mediating Factor in Intercultural Interactions.....	137
Discussion and Conclusion	140
References.....	143
Appendix C: Empirical Paper 3	146

Scrutinising local students' accounts of positive intercultural interactions: A multidimensional analysis.....	147
Introduction.....	147
Literature Review.....	149
Dimensions of Positive Intercultural Interactions.....	152
Methodology	155
Findings.....	164
Discussion	171
Limitations	174
Conclusion	174
References.....	176
Appendix D: Empirical Paper 4.....	183
A multi-theoretical analysis of the relationship between local students' perceptions of ethnic identity and accounts of positive intercultural interactions.....	184
Introduction.....	184
The Relationship between Ethnic Identity, and Intercultural Interactions on Campus	186
Research Aims	189
Methodology	189
Findings.....	198
Discussion	205
References.....	210

We believe that a person is a person through another person, that my humanity is caught up, bound up, inextricably, with yours. When I dehumanise you, I inexorably dehumanise myself. The solitary human is a contradiction in terms and therefore you seek to work for the common good because your humanity comes into its own in belonging.

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu

There ain't no sin and there ain't no virtue. There's just stuff people do.

John Steinbeck

Preamble

The early 21st century has been witness to unprecedented levels of mobility, resulting in heightened levels of cultural diversity in societies across the globe. We find ourselves living in a world characterised by an increasing multiplicity of links and interactions between people, cultures and societies (Block, 2013, p. 455). It has been argued that our present societal frameworks, and the increasing levels of diversity, or ‘ethnoscapes’ (Appadurai, 1990) found within them, have provided contested societal structures in which cultural complexity, diversity and ‘difference’ have assumed an increased level of salience, challenging traditional notions of identity (Rizvi, 2005a, 2005b). Further, it has been proposed that projected enhancements and developments in technology, communication and transport will fuel further cultural interdependence and interconnection in the future (Block, 2013; Rizvi, 2005a, 2005b). While global mobility is not in itself a new phenomenon, its present-day scale and complexity, and its implications for our understanding of identity and culture, have led to it being described by commentators as ‘super-diversity’ (Vertovec, 2007).

Within this context, it is not surprising that how individuals and broader societies accommodate and experience this ‘super-diversity’ is subject to intense scrutiny, with observation that questions surrounding how people relate to others are increasing in seriousness, urgency, and complexity (Rizvi, 2005a, 2005b). Certainly, the complexity and scale of present-day cultural diversity would seem to afford heightened opportunity for intercultural mixing. Yet, there is evidence that the quality of these experiences varies significantly. Indeed for all reports of heightened levels of intercultural interaction and its potential to generate positive affect and improved levels of intercultural awareness (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008), there are equal reports of contrasting experiences, including evidence of continued and increasing patterns of informal ethnic and racial segregation in multiple community contexts (Clack, Dixon, & Tredoux, 2005; Tredoux & Dixon, 2009b), and research highlighting the potential of intercultural interactions to reinforce prejudicial and stereotypical thinking (Finchilescu, 2010; Ladegaard & Cheng, 2014; Ruble & Zhang, 2013; Zagefka, 2013). It seems somewhat cruelly ironic that, in the months leading to the conclusion of this thesis, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were displaced as a result of ethnically-driven persecution (Jalabi, 2014). We live in an era where cultural boundaries are increasingly blurred, proximate and fluid, yet intolerance for cultural difference continues to pervade in the most sinister of ways. However, there are also

tremendous stories of intercultural growth and transformation throughout the world, these occurring at transnational, societal, and local levels. The recent European Union is a product of, and in turn symbolises, present day ‘globalising forces’ at a transnational level: a bringing together of multiple, culturally and linguistically heterogeneous nation states under a shared monetary, human rights and social justice framework. It is, in effect, the development of a superordinate, ‘pan-European’ political identity that overlays existing national, ethnic and cultural identities in the region. However, for the majority of individuals, globalising forces are manifested at the local level, in the simple, everyday routines and structures of their lives. As commentators have observed, cultural diversity is now present in most “ordinary social spaces” (Harris 2013, p. 6), requiring individuals to live, negotiate and manage cultural difference not in an idealised setting, but in the ‘mundane’ everyday (Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2005; Harris, 2013).

The university is one such ‘mundane’ social space. The higher education sector has been radically transformed by recent ‘globalising forces’ (Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett, 2010; Rizvi, 2005b, 2011). In 2011 nearly 4.3 million students were enrolled in higher education outside their country of citizenship, this figure double that recorded in 2000 (OECD, 2013). The country in which this research was situated, Australia, has been particularly impacted by this growth. In 2011, Australia, together with UK, US, Canada, France and Germany received over 50% of all of the world’s foreign students. In addition, Australia boasts the world’s highest rate of foreign students relative to the local student population, with foreign students accounting for close to 20% of Australia’s total tertiary student enrolments (OECD, 2013). The complexity of this picture is enhanced when it is noted that this figure only represents cultural diversity stemming from students who are not Australian citizens. However, Australia also hosts an incredibly culturally-diverse local population, with one in four residents born overseas, and nearly half of the population either claiming themselves, or a parent, to be born overseas (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

At a local level, this translates to an Australian university campus that contains a layer of visible cultural diversity that transcends that previously experienced by many of its students, one in which diversity is proximal, omnipresent and accessible. Given evidence that young persons in Australia are engaging with multiculturalism in many sites outside of the university that, it is argued, provide them with skills and competencies for further intercultural relations (Harris, 2013), one would expect intercultural interactions to also be occurring on university campuses. However, there is

overwhelming evidence that intercultural interactions on campuses are constrained and limited (Mak, Brown, & Wadey, 2014) leading to observations that for many students, on-campus interactions with persons from different cultural backgrounds are fleeting and minimal (Summers & Volet, 2008). Further, this appears to be an issue common to universities in many nations, with studies from USA (Bowman, 2012b; Williams & Johnson, 2011), UK (Brown & Richards, 2012), New Zealand (Ward, Masgoret, & Gezentsvey, 2009), China (Ladegaard & Cheng, 2014) and Korea (Jon, 2013) all reporting similar findings: that intercultural interaction experiences are for many students limited in frequency and depth. This issue also appears to be particularly salient for interactions involving at least one student from the dominant, 'host' (or 'local') culture. For instance, recent research from UK found international ('non-local') students were more likely to form intercultural relationships than their 'local' peers (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009). Related are findings that within a mixed-student population, student appraisals of mixed group work activity were lower for local students than their international peers, with suggestion that these negative appraisals may, for some students, militate against them working in culturally-mixed groups (Summers & Volet, 2008). The limited involvement of local students in intercultural interactions on university campuses is concerning, as it suggests that many are being denied the proven learning, cognitive and social benefits that intercultural interactions can afford (De Vita, 2002; Gurin, 2002; Haigh, 2014; Jackson, 2009).

So the question needs to be asked why it is that many local students do not avail themselves of the opportunities to engage in deep-level intercultural interactions on campus, despite the heightened levels of 'every day' cultural diversity that surround them. The answer to this question is not simple, resting in part in the broader structural and contextual elements within which intercultural interactions on a university campus are located, as well as the complex interplay of the many intra- and inter-personal dimensions that are brought to an interaction. However, despite evidence that the potential of meaningful intercultural interactions involving local students is not being fully-realised on university campuses, research exploring intercultural interactions through the lens of local students is limited (albeit emerging (Dunne, 2013; Peacock & Harrison, 2009)), with instead an emphasis in the literature on exploring the experiences of non-local students (Volet & Jones, 2012). Consequently, relatively little is known about how local students actually conceptualise, construct and experience intercultural interactions. This thesis addresses this gap. Using a variety of qualitative methods and theoretical lenses, this research provides insight into how local students conceptualise

and understand intercultural interactions on an Australian university campus, and reveals possible relationships between these dimensions and the nature, and actual depth, of their interactions. Further, ‘local’ students are operationalised in the research as Australian citizens: cultural heterogeneity across this population is recognised and accommodated, and a cultural homogeneous conceptualization rejected.

The thesis consists of four research papers (presented as Appendices) and an overarching thesis document that cohesively discusses and further analyses themes arising from the papers across four chapters. The remaining part of this chapter (Chapter 1) situates the thesis within current literature exploring intercultural interactions on university campuses, conceptually and empirically. It also introduces its research aims. Chapter 2 explores methodological issues that shaped the research design, methods and findings. This chapter does not provide detailed overviews of particular methods adopted, as these are described within each of the four empirical papers. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the empirical papers and Chapter 4 discusses the conceptual and methodological contributions of the thesis, and the empirical implications of its findings.

Before proceeding it is necessary to reflect on my role as researcher in this work. I came to this thesis from a 10-year background as an international student adviser at two metropolitan universities in Western Australia. In these positions I oversaw the strategic direction of support programs designed to assist international students in their transition to, and lived experiences, at university. A key part of these roles was representing the interests of international students at senior planning levels, and as such the roles involved regular communication and liaison with staff and students throughout the institution. Through these roles I became familiar with the experiences of thousands of international students. Students took me into their confidence and shared with me their personal, highly individual accounts of their experiences on and off campus: their friendship groups, their experiences of classrooms and group learning, and their foray into broader Australian society. I gained insight into the many ways their personal selves and identities intersected with, and were shaped by, the institution, particularly the teaching and learning experiences it afforded, and the social and interaction experiences that were inherent within them. I was inspired by the level of personal growth and transformation that I witnessed across this cohort – personal, professional and intercultural. At the same time I became acutely sensitive to institutional ‘sentiments’ toward the students. Conversations I held with staff, attendance at senior planning meetings, university documentation – all gave insight into the varied and

multifarious ways international students were ‘constructed’ in the institutions, and the different identities and positionalities they were assigned. Yet, through this, I became aware that there was a ‘gap’ in the picture of university experience that I was privy to: that was, the ‘intercultural’ experience of the local ‘Australian’ student. In many of the discussions, conversations, meetings I engaged in across the university, focus was specifically on the ‘international student’. Generally, and anecdotally, many international students appeared to be forming friendship groups with other international students, with many students discussing with me the difficulties they encountered forming meaningful friendships, and engaging in positive workgroups, with their Australian peers. At the same time, at the institutional level, international student experiences were discussed separate to those of Australian students. Indeed, there was little to no reference to Australian students in meetings I attended or documents I read pertaining to international student experience. Implicitly and structurally, the university created a separateness between Australian and international students, in essence encouraging a simple bifurcation that did not allow the complexity and multidimensionality of each students’ identities to be acknowledged or validated. Further, there appeared little interest in how students related across the campus. There was no sense of whether what was occurring was good or bad, nor was there an expressed desire to determine what was in fact occurring. The intergroup social experiences of students were perceived to sit beyond the responsibility of the university, with interest in student experience at an institutional level appearing to focus on the intrapersonal dimension of student experience.

Simply, at the institutional level, the intergroup experience was a silent issue. It appeared to not be important.

However, throughout these experiences, I subscribed to a position that we should care about intercultural interactions on campus (a position I still subscribe to). I believed that failure to understand intercultural interactions on campus had the potential to generate a climate that could (in)advertently marginalise or exclude persons on grounds of their ethnicity or appearance, possibly constraining learning outcomes, cognitive benefits and intercultural growth.

Thus I brought to this thesis a personal leaning toward, and belief in, the need for today’s scholars to be interculturally aware. I also brought a background and construction of intercultural interactions that was largely framed by my experience with international students and staff, as well as my own cultural background and identity. This is not to say that I conceptualised intercultural interactions as necessarily, and

exclusively, involving international students. However, my encounters (and the relationships I formed) with international students allowed me a privileged insight into the many, varied ways that intercultural interactions played out for these students, and caused me to reflect and question how such interactions similarly ‘played out’ for all students on campus.

In a thesis focused on cultural background, I feel it necessary to disclose mine – white, middle class, middle aged, Australian, and female. I share this not because I overtly or explicitly assign to those labels prescribed meanings that shape my experiences at a conscious level. Rather, I believe that these dimensions of cultural identity shape one’s experience at often covert, subconscious levels. Thus, for the purposes of this research it was important that I recognised and, where possible, suspended the judgments and constructions that my background had instilled in me. By doing so I tried to minimise the risk of imposing on participants through the course of the interview my values, judgments and constructions, and allowing them to interfere in the analysis of their statements. Of course, and as indicated elsewhere in this thesis, I believe that it is difficult to fully suspend oneself from all of one’s beliefs and conditioning, as often they operate at an implicit level. Therefore, I adopted methods and processes that were intended to ensure validity (such as interjudge agreement on coding), and these are discussed further in Chapter 2 of this thesis overview.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the place of this thesis in a larger research project exploring intercultural interactions on a university campus. While the findings of the studies reported in this PhD thesis contribute to those of the overarching research project, and the preparation of the papers was consistent with the collaborative nature of the overall research project, each paper presented in this thesis was prepared independently from other studies conducted as part of the overall research project. Importantly, the alignment of the studies presented in this PhD thesis to the overarching research project provided me with rich opportunities to share and further articulate my ideas and thinking with a team of experienced researchers. The robust intellectual scrutiny this process afforded my ideas not only allowed them to be further developed and refined, it is also modelled intellectual and research rigour, and provided invaluable insight into the research process. I came to realise that the PhD experience was as much about my personal journey and growth as a researcher as it was about the generation of new knowledge and ways of thinking about phenomena. It has been a transformative experience cognitively, emotionally and professionally.

Publication details of empirical papers

Paper 1

Colvin, C., Volet, S., & Fozdar, F. (2014). Local university students and intercultural interactions: conceptualising culture, seeing diversity and experiencing interactions. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 33(3), 440-455.

Paper 2

Colvin, C., Fozdar, F., & Volet, S. (2015). Intercultural interactions of mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students in small group learning activities: a Bourdieusian analysis. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 36(3), 414-433.

Paper 3

Colvin, C., & Volet, S. (2014). Scrutinising local students' accounts of positive intercultural interactions: A multidimensional analysis. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 42, 77-92.

Paper 4

Colvin, C., & Volet, S. (under review). A multi-theoretical analysis of the relationship between local students' perceptions of ethnic identity and accounts of positive intercultural interactions.

Introduction

Despite increasing levels of cultural diversity on university campuses across the globe, and university initiatives aimed at fostering activity that embraces this diversity, there is evidence to suggest that the recent growth in on-campus cultural diversity has not been reflected in a corresponding rise in the level of intercultural interactions between students. Rather, research suggests that for many students, on-campus intercultural interactions are fleeting and tangential (Kimmel & Volet, 2010b; Summers & Volet, 2008) and are not providing the deep intercultural learning outcomes advocated in conceptual and empirical literature (De Vita, 2002; De Vita, 2005; Jackson, 2009; Killick, 2012). This trend is particularly significant when considered in the current context of the globalising forces shaping our societies at all levels, these forces in turn generating an increased focus on our capacity to relate effectively and meaningfully with persons from cultural backgrounds different from our own. Today's university students not only need such capacities in order to ensure that they are able to realise the learning and social benefits that a culturally diverse campus affords, but also in the future, as they negotiate and encounter diversity in their professional and social circles.

Benefits of Intercultural Interactions

There is compelling conceptual and empirical argument for the potential of intercultural interactions to generate benefit across cognitive, learning and psycho-social dimensions. Intercultural interactions have been linked with cognitive growth (Bowman, 2010; Gurin, 2002), enhanced learning, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Denson & Zhang, 2010; Leung & Chiu, 2010); improved learning and intellectual outcomes (Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004; Gurin, 2002); heightened levels of college satisfaction (Bowman & Denson, 2011); and importantly, improved intercultural attitudes, dispositions and levels of cultural tolerance and open-mindedness (Denson, 2009; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Williams & Johnson, 2011). In light of current political discourse around notions of global harmony and, at a more local level, social cohesion (Harris, 2013), the potential of intercultural interactions to reduce prejudice and enhance intercultural awareness and empathy (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) is desirable and, in the context of future graduates needing to engage and flourish in an increasingly interconnected world, intercultural skills and understanding will be essential.

Intercultural Interactions as Complex Psychosocial Phenomena

Given these compelling empirical arguments attesting to the importance of intercultural interactions as a vehicle for generating cognitive, learning and psychosocial benefits, and in the face of heightened levels of cultural diversity on campus, why is it that intercultural interactions are not being embraced by students? A review of the literature highlights the vexed nature of this question, revealing intercultural interactions to be complex, situated phenomena mediated by multiple affective, behavioural, cognitive and structural dimensions. While intercultural interactions have been the focus of extensive study through multiple disciplinary and theoretical lenses, the majority of this research has typically been unidimensional: that is, it has focused on one dimension (for instance, anxiety) and conceptual lens (such as Social Identity Theory). Further, while this literature has contributed to our understanding of the many dimensions that may shape intercultural interactions, it has provided limited insight into how these dimensions and conceptual lenses interrelate, thereby perhaps failing to provide the depth of insight that a multidimensional and multi-conceptual analysis can yield. Additionally, emerging conceptual and empirical literature highlights the need for future research to consider intercultural interactions' social and contextual rootedness, and the critical role these factors play in shaping how interactions play out. Indeed, it is perhaps the failure of extant research to fully explore intercultural interactions as complex socio-cultural phenomena that may have hindered our understanding of the processes and qualities inherent in them. It is not surprising, therefore, that there are calls emerging in the literature for research into intercultural interactions to adopt methods and designs that recognise intercultural interactions as complex, multilayered and multidimensional, arguing that such research has the potential to glean insight and provide explanation "that may not be easily interpretable from one approach" or perspective (Phinney, 2008, p. 107).

The present research heeds those calls. While focused on exploring local students' understandings and experiences of intercultural interactions on a university campus, it does this within the prism of a multidimensional conceptualisation and operationalisation of intercultural interactions. Further, rather than simply exploring the multiple dimensions known to mediate intercultural interaction experiences as separate entities, this research explores the inter-relationships between them. However, before these relationships could be explored, the present research needed to identify what factors were known to mediate interactions. A comprehensive review of the literature revealed multiple, if seemingly disparate, mediators: anxiety, intercultural competence,

agency, ethnic identity, and context. Conceptual and empirical overviews of these six factors, and the processes by which they mediate intercultural interactions, follows.

Mediators of Intercultural Interactions

Anxiety

Extensive literature notes the mediating role of anxiety in intercultural interactions (Gudykunst, 2005; Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Mak et al., 2014; Shaw, Lee, & Williams, 2014; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). According to this body of literature, many people associate intercultural interactions with uncertainty: uncertainty vis-à-vis how one should engage with an intercultural interaction, and uncertainty regarding the prediction of likely outcomes of intercultural interactions. Conceptually (Gudykunst, 2005) and empirically (Dunne, 2009; Shaw et al., 2014; Williams & Johnson, 2011) it is argued that anxiety will not only deter persons from engaging in interactions with diverse others (Dunne, 2009; Williams & Johnson, 2011), but that it can also sustain bias and prejudice even during the interaction itself (Shaw et al., 2014). Related is the notion of intercultural interactions as a source of threat to one's sense of identification and goals (Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Morrison, Plaut, & Ybarra, 2010; Stephan, Diaz-Loving, & Duran, 2000; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). For instance, Harrison and Peacock (2010) observed that local students perceived student diversity on campus as a threat to their academic success and on-campus group identity, this militating against intercultural interactions.

While empirically it has been demonstrated that intercultural interaction experiences are an important vehicle for reducing future levels of anxiety and perceptions of threat (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008), noteworthy are contrasting findings that intercultural interaction experiences will not always lead to reduced anxiety. This literature argues that if anxiety is salient during an interaction, then the interaction is unlikely to reduce anxiety for future interactions, and will instead deter interactant(s) from engaging in future interactions (Dunne, 2009). In this respect, the qualities inherent in the interaction appear to become significant, as engagement with cultural diversity on its own will not reduce threat and improve the likelihood of future meaningful interactions.

Finally, mention must be made of emerging literature that conceptualises intercultural anxiety regarding interactions, and the cultural disequilibrium they can generate for the interactant, as necessary precursors for intercultural learning (Bowman & Denson, 2011; Kim & Ruben, 1992; Mezirow, 2009). Situated across multiple discipline and theoretical frameworks, including education psychology research

connected to Piaget's notion of disequilibrium (Piaget, 1975), transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2009), or Kim's cross-cultural communication Stress-Adaptation-Growth Model of Acculturation (Kim, 1992; Kim & Ruben, 1992), this body of literature considers stress and discomfort as necessary precursors to deep shifts or changes in one's thinking about culture and diversity (Hunter, 2008; Savicki, 2008; Taylor, 2007), challenging an often implicit understanding underpinning intercultural research that anxiety will always militate against an interaction, and positive affect is a necessary precursor for positive intercultural outcomes (Dixon, Levine, Reicher, & Durrheim, 2012).

Intercultural Competence

Another dimension known to mediate students' engagement with diversity is their level of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006; Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002). A seemingly nebulous and varied concept, with no singular definition (Deardorff, 2006), the tenets of intercultural competence are known by other terms including multicultural personality (Van Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2002), intercultural sensitivity (Hammer, 2011; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003), cultural intelligence (Ang et al., 2007) and intercultural maturity (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). However, despite differing terms, labels, and operationalisations across the models, there is consensus that they all involve the skills and understandings needed to interact "effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures" (Perry & Southwell, 2011, p. 455), and that increased levels of intercultural competence will result in a greater likelihood of positive interaction outcomes (Stier, 2006). All models recognise intercultural competence skills as involving cognitive, affective and behavioural domains (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2013; Van der Zee, Van Oudenhoven, Ponterotto, & Fietzer, 2013), thus they conceptualise intercultural competence as a multidimensional construct. Elements common to these models include cultural empathy, open-mindedness, emotive stability, ethnorelativism, cultural knowledge, curiosity and respect (Deardorff, 2006; Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000).

Within this literature, intercultural competence and intercultural interactions are presented as interdependent and recursive: heightened levels of cultural competence are linked to a greater propensity to engage with diversity and report a positive and meaningful encounter and, similarly, a meaningful and positive intercultural interaction is likely to enhance one's level of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006; Perry & Southwell, 2011). However, these patterns are not universal, with literature also

highlighting the mediating role that both the quality and type of intercultural interaction (Chang, Yuan, & Chuang, 2013; Shaw et al., 2014), as well as one's meaning-making of them (Bowman & Denson, 2012), have on the relationship between an intercultural interaction and intercultural learning and competence outcomes. In light of these observations, it is not surprising that there have been recent calls for a more nuanced examination of the relationship between the nature of intercultural experience and the development of intercultural skills and understanding (Bowman, 2012b; Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012; Bowman & Denson, 2012; Bowman & Park, 2014).

Further and related is emerging literature exploring the role that students' constructions of diversity, cultural difference and intercultural interactions can play in affording or constraining interactions (Brown & Richards, 2012; Halualani, 2010a, 2010b) leading to the observation that intercultural interactions are not simply shaped by external and situational factors and processes, but also "the meanings and constructions that participants bring to the interactions themselves" (Halualani, 2010b, p. 320). Such a finding highlights the need for intercultural interaction research to consider students' understandings, experiences and interpretations of intercultural interactions.

Agency

The mediating role of agency pervades much recent literature relating to intercultural interactions on campuses (Bennett, 2013; Brown, 2009a; Dunne, 2013), however the relationship often presents in an inverse way. That is, students often perceive the failure of intercultural interactions to occur as a result of other interactants failing, or being reluctant, to initiate an interaction (Brown & Richards, 2012; Dunne, 2009; Ramiah, Schmid, Hewstone, & Floe, 2015). Further, this perceived lack of agency is observed in both local (Brown, 2009b) and non-local (Brown, 2009a; Lu & Hsu, 2008) students. The apparent reticence of students to engage in intercultural interactions could be considered a form of apathy and not agency, yet, as Marginson and colleagues (Marginson & Sawir, 2011) observe, by choosing not to engage in an intercultural interaction, a student is in effect exercising agency. Notwithstanding, for many students, it would appear that they expect interactions to occur by chance (Bennett, 2013; Leask & Carroll, 2011), and that by not exercising agency, students may be limiting their opportunities for intercultural interactions.

Identity and Ethnic Identity

Extensive empirical literature has explored identity's role in mediating intercultural interactions (Brown & Richards, 2012; Levin, Van Laar, & Foote, 2006;

Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001; Phinney, Jacoby, & Silva, 2007; Sidanius, Levin, Van Laar, & Sears, 2008; Sidanius, Levin, Van Laar, & Sinclair, 2004). Identity is in essence how we perceive ourselves, and also how we perceive we are seen by others (Izumi, 2010). In the sense that identity is determined in relation to others and context, it is considered by many researchers to be socially constructed and situated (Jones, 2009; König, 2009; O'Sullivan-Lago & de Abreu, 2010). The significance of identity for the present research is its potential to influence relationship decisions. Further, this influence is bi-directional: identity not only influences relationship choices, relationship choices also help to further shape identity (Phinney, 2005; Van Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret, 2006). Identity is a construct belonging to many research traditions, including sociology (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Brubaker, Loveman, & Stamatov, 2004), social psychology (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992), and psychosocial developmental psychology (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966; Phinney & Ong, 2007), and is therefore conceptualised and operationalised in multiple ways: at an individual or group level, as fixed or fluid, or as involving one or multiple dimensions, including ethnicity, gender, faith and sexuality (Abes, 2007; Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005). Indeed, the breadth and divergence of how identity is operationalised in research has led to the observation that “everyone it seems is talking about identities, but it is not at all clear that they are talking about the same thing” (Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005, p. 98), and even the sombre claim that the concept of identity “bear[s] far more theoretical, empirical, and political weight than it can support” and risks being unable to “serve well” social research (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 2).

The present research was sympathetic to these concerns and accordingly focused on two specific theoretical bodies of identity literature that have been found to provide insight into processes behind intercultural interactions. These are the bodies of literature informed by social identity perspectives (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) and developmental psychology research exploring ethnic identity (Phinney, 2005). Each of these theoretical bodies, and their implications for intercultural interactions, is reviewed in turn.

Social Identity Perspectives theories. This body of research stems from Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory (Allport, 1954), which posits that intergroup contact can lead to enhanced intergroup outcomes and reduced prejudice, providing certain conditions are present. Since Allport's model, many different models and theories have been developed premised on the mediating role of group identification in intergroup interactions. These include Social Identity and Social Categorisation theories

(Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 1987); and Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius et al., 2008; Sidanius, Pratto, Van Laar, & Levin, 2004). Common to these models are the processes of group categorisation, evaluation and comparison. Group status and hierarchy are at essence in these theories: groups are not equally positioned, with certain groups enjoying a higher status than others. Further, the desire for higher status groups to want to protect their dominant position can lead to behaviours and attitudes that exclude and discriminate against outgroups (Hehman et al., 2012), and potentially militate against meaningful interactions.

Particularly noteworthy for the present research is emerging social identity research that accommodates identity as a fluid and multidimensional construct. Early research in social identity is predicated on a simple conceptualisation of intergroup contact, in that it assumes static and often singular ingroup identifications, typically driven by essential and fixed notions of one's ethnicity and culture. Further, much research assumes that the groups involved (typically two) should fall into clear dualisms – such as a majority or minority group. However, as recent conceptual and empirical literature argues, the reality is that identity is a multidimensional construct that is always being developed and negotiated on an individual and social level (Rattansi & Phoenix, 2005; Weigert & Gecas, 2005). An individual can have multiple identities simultaneously salient, or they may change identity according to their situation or context (Amiot, Terry, & Callan, 2007; Amiot, Terry, Wirawan, & Grice, 2010; Crisp, Turner, & Hewstone, 2010). Related, an individual can have many motivations or strategies for ingroup affiliation, and these can also differ according to the group and context (Leach et al., 2008).

Social identity perspective literature exploring intercultural interactions typically employs an ethnic social identity, and finds inverse relationships between the strength of one's affiliation with their ethnic identity and their propensity to engage in interactions with persons perceived as belonging to the other group, and positive relationships to increased levels of stereotype and prejudice regarding the 'cultural other' (Dixon et al., 2010; Finchilescu, 2010; Zagefka, 2013). Consistent with the premise of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007) that groups are positioned unequally, social identity literature typically divides actors involved in interactions into 'major' and 'minor' groups, with research tending to focus more on the 'minor' group. However, emerging, albeit limited, literature has focused on the intercultural interaction experiences of 'majority' students, finding a relationship between the strength of one's ethnic identity and levels of prejudicial

thinking (Morrison et al., 2010). Related, Sidanius, Levin et al (Sidanius et al., 2008; Sidanius, Levin, et al., 2004) scrutinised the intercultural interactions of students representing all major ethnic groups on a university campus through a social dominance orientation lens and found relationships between a ‘white’ student’s ethnic identity, their propensity to join ‘white’ student organisations on campus, heightened opposition to ethnic diversity on campus, and an increased sense of ethnic victimisation. Thus, social identity research exploring relationships between ethnic identity and intercultural interactions typically finds heightened levels of ethnic identity to be linked to a greater propensity to perceive the ‘outgroup’ as a threat, and therefore engage in exclusionary behaviour.

Developmental psychology research exploring ethnic identity. A contrasting explanation of the role of ethnic identity in shaping intercultural interactions is found in developmental psychology, particularly research informed by Phinney’s Model of Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney, 1989; Phinney, 1993; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). This body of literature, largely inspired by Marcia’s developmental identity research (Marcia, 1966, 1980), conceptualises ethnic identity as processual and developmental, with the level of one’s identity development related to one’s sense of self and ultimately interaction outcomes (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

Phinney operationalised her conceptualisations of ethnic identity in two formats: a heuristic model of ethnic identity as proceeding through incremental statuses (Phinney, 1989; Phinney, 1993), and the development of an instrument (the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure, or MEIM) designed to measure one’s affiliation with their ethnic identity (as revealed through measures of exploration and commitment) (Phinney, 1992; Phinney & Ong, 2007). The former conceptualises three key presentations (or ‘statuses’) of ethnic identity: unexamined, which involves little or no exploration of one’s ethnicity; moratorium, in which there is evidence of identity exploration, although confusion as to its meaning; and achieved, in which there is evidence of exploration and a clear, secure understanding and acceptance of one’s ethnic identity. Therefore, each status represents a different level of ethnic identity awareness, including attitudes, behaviours and cognitions. Of particular significance to this research are findings in developmental ethnic identity research of relationships between the strength, or status, of one’s ethnic identity and levels of self-esteem (Brittian, Umaña-Taylor, & Derlan, 2013; Syed & Azmitia, 2009), propensity to regard the ‘other group’ in a favourable light (Yip, Sellers, & Seaton, 2006) and the

development of higher quality (Way, Santos, Niwa, & Kim-Gervey, 2008) and more “personally meaningful” (Syed & Azmitia, 2008, p. 210) intercultural experiences.

However, the relevance of the theories’ tenets for ‘majority’ ethnic populations, particularly majority ‘White’ populations, are contested. For example, Phinney’s research has led to her observing ethnic identity to be more important to ethnic minorities, than to dominant, ‘White’ populations (Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990), and much developmental psychology literature is predicated on this premise (Juang & Syed, 2010). Emerging empirical literature has explored and compared the salience of ethnic identity among majority and minority groups, finding that ethnic identity may be experienced differently across different ethnic groups (Syed & Azmitia, 2009; Worrell, 2007). For example, Worrell (2007) examined relationships between ethnic identity, other group orientation, self esteem and academic achievement across four (racially-determined) groups of academically talented high school students. They found that the relationship between ethnic identity and self esteem was significant for Hispanic students, yet not for Whites. However, and by contrast, Syed and Azmitia (2009) found, in their longitudinal research into the ethnic identity development of college students, that White students’ identity exploration and commitment did increase through college at a rate commensurate to the other racial groups identified in the study (Black, Latino, and Asian-American). Related, Syed and Juang (2014) did not find evidence to support the hypothesis that ethnic identity exploration and commitment are more strongly related to psychological functioning for ethnic minority populations than Whites, instead finding them to be similarly experienced across both populations.

Thus, and in conclusion, while the role of ethnic identity in mediating intercultural interactions is strongly supported conceptually and empirically (Bowman & Park, 2014; West, Pearson, Dovidio, Shelton, & Trail, 2009), the processes underpinning this relationship are complex, mixed, and at times conflicting, with understanding and sense-making contingent on the theoretical lens adopted to analyse the phenomena. As noted, while social identity literature (Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007) highlights the militating role identity can play in limiting intercultural interactions, literature informed by Phinney’s Model of Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney, 2008; Phinney, 1993; Phinney & Ong, 2007) suggests that a heightened ethnic identity will afford them. The two bodies of literature also report mixed findings relating to the role of one’s ‘cultural’ background in mediating how intercultural interactions are experienced.

However, scrutiny of this body of research reveals a number of limitations. First, while both Social Identity Theory (Crisp et al., 2010) and Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney, 2008; Phinney, 1993; Phinney & Ong, 2007) recognise identity as a multidimensional construct and advocate research that accommodates and reveals this multidimensionality, very few empirical studies adopt a multidimensional identity lens. That is, intercultural interactions are typically explored through the lens of one identity dimension only, and this is typically ethnic identity. Accordingly, the relationships between ethnic identity, other identity dimensions, and intercultural interactions have not been fully explored empirically. Second, and closely related, is the implicit predication of this research that ethnic identity is the most salient identity within the context of an intercultural interaction. The salience of ethnic identity relative to other dimensions of identity within the context of a positive intercultural interaction has also received limited empirical scrutiny. Third, while there is conceptual claim for scrutiny of intercultural interactions through a multi-theoretical ethnic identity lens, the majority of empirical studies typically adopt the lens of only one ethnic identity theory. By limiting analysis to one conceptual lens, it is possible that the full richness, complexity and breadth of relationships between ethnic identity and intercultural interactions may not have been revealed. Fourth, much extant ethnic identity and intercultural research has focused on minority or 'non-local' populations. Consequently ethnic identity as it is experienced and understood in majority, local student populations is little understood (notwithstanding notable exceptions cf. Brown & Richards, 2012; Levin, Sinclair, Sidanius, & Van Laar, 2009; Sidanius, Levin, et al., 2004; Syed, 2010). Finally, an implicit tenet within Social Identity Theory, and, more broadly, Intergroup Contact Theory, is the relationship between a positive intercultural interaction, enhanced intergroup thinking, and reduced prejudicial thinking (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007). It is a construct that is at the essence of these theories. Yet, and surprisingly, little literature has conceptually or empirically interrogated what defines a positive intercultural interaction across multiple dimensions.

Context

There is strong conceptual argument for intercultural interaction research to recognise and better understand the mediating and militating role of context in intercultural interactions (Ata, Bastian, & Lusher, 2009; Deaux & Martin, 2003; Dixon et al., 2005). Context shapes interactions by enveloping them, and the many cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions inherent within them, in an axiological, sociocultural and normative framework that can militate or mediate how actors will

engage. Its role in an interaction is primarily structural. As Ata et al. (2009) observe, “contact in the real world does not happen in a vacuum” (p. 499), arguing that there is “good reason” for exploring intercultural interactions “within a larger social context that includes broader intergroup perceptions as well as the influence of relative social norms” (p. 499). Other conceptual literature declares that a failure to investigate intercultural interactions as contextualised is a “neglect of the contextual rootedness and specificity of social relations” and will lead to research outcomes that may be “devoid of meaning” (Dixon et al., 2005, p. 701). Empirically, there is an equally strong basis for intercultural interaction research to consider the mediating role of context in affording or constraining intercultural interactions (Babbitt & Sommers, 2011; Kimmel & Volet, 2010b; Stein, Post, & Allison, 2000; Tredoux & Dixon, 2009a).

Of relevance to this research is empirical literature exploring the role of context within intercultural interactions on university and college campuses (Antonio et al., 2004; Bourke, 2010; Dawson, 2007; Denson & Chang, 2009; Kimmel & Volet, 2010a; Kimmel & Volet, 2010b; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Umbach & Kuh, 2006).

Operationalisations of context in this body of research include the level of diversity on campus (structural diversity) (Bourke, 2010; Denson & Chang, 2009; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Umbach & Kuh, 2006), situational elements including academic discipline (Kimmel & Volet, 2010b), informal or formal learning settings (Kimmel & Volet, 2010a), university cafeterias (Clack et al., 2005; Ramiah et al., 2015), and social elements including interpersonal social networks (Dawson, 2007), and group and category affiliations (Ata et al., 2009). While these studies provide insight into the different ways that context mediates intercultural interactions, the breadth and diversity of context’s operationalisation within them highlights its complex, multilayered, and possibly overlapping nature. Indeed, it is argued that intercultural interactions, and the actors involved in them, are influenced by multiple, synchronous contexts, each bringing their own set of norms, values and affordances, and while there is empirical research highlighting the value of adopting a multi-contextual conceptual lens in intercultural interaction research (Kimmel & Volet, 2010a), this research is limited in number.

Research Aims

In light of evidence that students are studying on increasingly culturally-diverse campuses affording them unprecedented opportunities for intercultural mixing, the limited take up of these opportunities by students is concerning, possibly denying them

the many affective, behavioural, and cognitive benefits that meaningful intercultural interactions can generate. It is an area that merits scrutiny.

However, the breadth of dimensions identified in this review found to mediate intercultural interactions highlights their multidimensional, multi-layered nature. Simply, intercultural interactions are complex phenomena shaped by multiple, often competing cognitive, affective, agentic and structural elements, situated across multiple disciplinary and theoretical paradigms. Yet in spite of this conceptual realisation, little empirical research into intercultural interactions has been able to effectively capture this rich complexity, nor elicit the dynamic interplay of the many differing affective, cognitive and structural aspects that mediate them. It is argued that research into intercultural interactions would benefit from a design that not only accommodates, but also further elucidates, this complexity and multiplicity.

The present research adopted such a design. It employed multiple conceptual, theoretical and methodological lenses to gain insight into how local, majority students construct, understand and experience positive intercultural interactions on an Australian university campus. While a particular focus of the present research was on the role of ethnic identity, and context, in affording or constraining these interactions, the research also sought to explore the relationship between these two constructs and other mediating factors.

This thesis is structured around four empirical papers, each paper adopting a different conceptual framework through which to scrutinise the research phenomena. These include the adoption of a constructivist epistemology to elicit insight into the intercultural understandings, dispositions and conceptualisations that actors bring to intercultural interactions; the adoption of Bourdieu's tools of field, habitus and capital to reveal the structuring, multi-layered nature of context; and scrutinising intercultural interactions as multidimensional through the development, and application, of an inductively-developed and theoretically informed coding instrument. A commitment to multiplicity is evident in the research design of each of the four empirical papers, each paper adopting multiple conceptual, theoretical or methodological lenses, allowing for a deeper, more nuanced insight into the issues being investigated than might be achieved through uni-dimensional operationalisations of the constructs. Examples include the simultaneous application and integration of two theoretical models of ethnic identity; the development, and application of a coding framework that not only operationalised intercultural interactions as multidimensional, but also sought to reveal insight into how interactions differed in depth; and the adoption of multiple and mixed methods of

analysis, including a technique known as ‘quantitizing’ (Sandelowski et al., 2009; Seltzer-Kelly, Westwood, & Peña-Guzman, 2012). These themes are discussed further in Chapter 2.

Notwithstanding, at its core, the current research explored how local students themselves perceived, understood, and experienced positive intercultural interactions, diversity and culture on university campuses, to gain insight into perceived affordances and constraints of such interactions.

Specific research aims were to:

1. Gain insight into the relationships between first-year, local students’ conceptualisations of culture, perceptions of diversity, and intercultural interactions on an Australian University campus, and the role a student’s cultural background might play in shaping those relationships.
2. Gain insight into how local students understood, perceived and experienced intercultural interactions within small group learning activities at university to determine how the learning environment afforded or constrained them.
3. Explore the role of student agency within intercultural interactions.
4. Identify qualities within positive intercultural interactions, and identifying patterns between them and intercultural transformation outcomes.
5. Examine the salience of ethnic identity, and its relationship with the salience of other key identity dimensions, within positive intercultural interactions.

A final note: the focus on ‘majority’ local students in this research complements an extensive body of research into intercultural interactions on campus that has tended to focus on the non-local, ‘ethnic-minority’ student. However, this research did not prescribe to a singular, essential construction of the local student. Rather, it recognised that local students are culturally heterogeneous, and represent the cultural diversity found in broader society. This diversity was therefore accommodated, and explored, in this research design.

The next chapter of this overview (Chapter 2) outlines the methodological considerations shaping this research.

Abide not with dualism,
Carefully avoid pursuing it;
As soon as you have right and wrong,
Confusion ensues, and Mind is lost.

Chien-chih Seng-ts'an,
Third Zen Patriarch (Dies 606CE)

(Translated by D.T.Suzuki from http://home.primusonline.com.au/peony/faith_in_mind.htm)

Chapter 2: Methodological Issues

Introduction

In the previous chapter I presented an overview of research into positive intercultural interactions that presents them as multidimensional, complex phenomena that would benefit first, from scrutiny through similarly multidimensional theoretical and methodological lenses, and second, from a research perspective focused on eliciting the meanings, understandings and perceptions that actors have of them. This chapter outlines the methodology and methods adopted in the present research, and articulates how they are consistent with, and contribute to, the pursuit of these objectives. It also elaborates on how the methodological framework that overarches this research (and the epistemological, methodological assumptions inherent within it) was as much shaped by, as it in fact shaped, the design, analysis and findings.

However, a significant focus of this chapter will also be on how the broader methodological processes and decisions underpinning this research shaped my own thinking about, and raised my personal awareness of, methodology, ontology, and epistemology, and how axiological these constructs are. As I write this chapter, I reflect on the ontological and epistemological positions that I held at the beginning of this research process, and recognise that while these were similar to those I hold now, they represent a more fixed, linear, and bifurcated conceptualisation of the constructs. I realise that at the start of this research I tended to see decisions regarding methodology as ‘choices’ between seemingly ‘polar’ positions (for instance, choices between a quantitative and qualitative methodology, or inductive and deductive analysis). However, through the research processes reported in this thesis, I began to view many of these polarisations in a more dialogic light. I began to understand methodology as a recursive process, and saw the potential of adopting fluid, and multilayered conceptualisations of research objects and methods for eliciting a more complex, nuanced and multidimensional insight into them than might be achieved through the utilisation of more conventional, mono-theoretical and mono-methodological positions. In this respect, I started to appreciate critical commentary observing the potential of “disabling dualisms” (Sayer, 1997, p. 459) and “oppressive binaries” (Goldenberg, 2007, p. 139) in research methodology to suppress scrutiny of heterogeneity and complexity in data and began to recognise the possible benefits that could be gleaned from a more dialogic approach. I also became increasingly aware of the role that I had, as the researcher, in shaping the study’s design and outcomes, as well as how these

decisions were in fact informed by my underlying ontological and epistemological values.

In this chapter, I will develop these themes. I will explore the broad ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning this research, how they developed, framed and shaped the methodological and method decisions underpinning the research's design, and conversely, how the research process shaped my own, personal methodological assumptions. Information and decisions regarding participants, the research site, procedures and analysis is also provided, as is a short statement relating my own 'position' in the research. While each of the four empirical papers in this thesis provide specific detail vis-à-vis the methodologies and methods employed within them, the information provided in this chapter provides insight into the methodology and method for the overall thesis. These contributions are intended to assist the reader in better interpreting the thesis and its findings.

Methodology (and its Inherent Dualisms)

Each of the four empirical papers presented in this thesis make claim to their grounding in a constructivist and, on occasion, phenomenological ontology. In this respect, the fundamental predication of the research is that intercultural interactions are phenomena that are without a universal, or 'ultimate' truth. Rather, they are events that are uniquely 'constructed' by individual actors according to their individual world views, experiences, and the subjective meaning makings they assign to them. Continuing this logic, actors' perceptions, subjectivities and meaning makings in turn shape their future perceptions and experiences of the world, and phenomena within it, these experiences and perceptions in turn shaping further perceptions, subjectivities and meaning making. The notion of an objective reality of intercultural interactions is therefore replaced by one that is negotiated, subjective, uniquely experienced. The actor's 'point of view' or subjective 'truth' is the phenomenon, and the agency of actors to construct and assign meaning is assumed.

Phenomenology shares many of the precepts of constructivism. It too rejects positivism and an objective reality for a multiplicitous reality that is shaped by each individual actor's experiences, and the 'meaning makings' they assign to them, and also, the intersection of these elements with the researcher – themselves an individual agent with their own subjectivities, meaning makings and unique experiences. It is a method that not only acknowledges the subjective and constructed nature of reality and experience, but also the subjective and constructed reality of research. Within phenomenological research, experience assumes heightened salience. The lived

experience, situated in the actor's real world, is the reality: diversity of lived experience is assumed both within each person, and across a population. Unlike 'pure' constructivism, phenomenology offers a methodological framework for identifying the (multiple) key essences or truths of a phenomenon through the identification and generation of themes within the data. It is therefore a partly reductionist methodology that also recognises and accommodates diversity in how phenomena are experienced and perceived.

Thus there appears a consistency in the methodological, ontological and epistemological premises of this thesis. Yet, and as alluded to earlier in this chapter, as the thesis progressed I became aware of inherent, dialectic tensions in the philosophies and assumptions that I brought to the research, these often presenting as 'dualisms' in thought. For example, I began questioning the possibility of purely constructivist research, instead recognising the value of seeking 'essence' within a constructivist paradigm. Indeed, dualism emerged as a strong theme in the research, pervading many ontological and epistemological decisions. Accordingly, I will structure the following section around the dominant dualisms that underpinned the methodology for this research. While the dualisms are presented independently, it must be noted that they did in fact work interdependently to shape this research.

Dualism Number 1: Essentialism or Constructivism?

The present research scrutinised local students' experiences of positive intercultural interactions occurring on a university campus. It sought to identify the affordances, constraints, and processes inherent within positive intercultural interactions, and the role that these elements play in co-shaping interaction experiences. Positive intercultural interactions were therefore the object of the research: they are positioned as discrete phenomena that need to be better understood. This research design could suggest a positivist ontology and epistemology. Further, the decision to seek to better understand positive intercultural interactions could presuppose that they comprise common, essential qualities that can be identified.

Yet, the methodologies employed in this thesis claim a contrasting ontological and epistemological position in which intercultural interactions are conceptualised as distinct phenomena, socially-constructed, and experienced uniquely by actors. The research rejected a positivist and essentialist approach to researching social phenomena, heeding conceptual calls that these methodological frameworks have the potential to "reduce and simplify the data, at the cost of its nuances and ambiguity" (Frost et al., 2010, p. 456). Therefore, rather than seeking to capture an objective, quintessential

essence of intercultural interactions and related phenomena, this research aimed to reveal and scrutinise the “alternative truths and alternative realities” (Kelly, 1955, p. 795) that participants constructed of their experiences. This commitment was reflected in the methodology section of each paper reported in the present research. For example, Paper 1 observes:

A qualitative methodology grounded in a constructivist epistemology was adopted [for this research]. This approach recognises that conceptualisations of culture, perceptions of diversity and intercultural interaction experiences are phenomena constructed by individuals ... the researchers did not prescribe to the participants a definition or understanding of what an intercultural interaction was: rather, the research was interested in identifying how students understood and experienced these phenomena.

Similarly, Paper 3 states:

The research recognised positive intercultural interactions as “interactionally and socially constructed” (Keckes, 2012, p. 39) events, and accordingly sought to elicit, through scrutinising local students’ accounts, how they perceived, and ascribed meaning to, their positive intercultural interaction experiences.

Research and analysis methods consistent with these constructivist ontological and epistemological positions were therefore adopted for this research. Research questions were designed to elicit and accommodate variance in experience and thought across the sample, allowing for the identification of ‘meaningful patterns’, relationships and diverse conceptualisations in students’ accounts. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were adopted, as it was believed that they were an ideal medium to gain deep insight into the meanings and understandings that participants assigned to their experiences.

The researchers deliberately refrained from imposing definitions of key constructs (such as culture) onto participants: rather, participants were invited to share their own conceptualisations and understandings of key constructs relevant to the research questions, including positive intercultural interactions, culture, and identity. Inductive and deductive research methods of data analysis were also employed, the former enabling the identification of ideas and thinking important to participants to be revealed. Driving the process throughout was an underlying commitment to *Verstehen* (Weber, Roth, & Wittich, 1978), that is, a commitment to understanding the meanings actors assign to social phenomena, and an implicit rejection of positivist, essentialist interpretations.

However, throughout this research process, I became aware of an emerging, internal tension between how constructivism was conceptualised and operationalised for this research (that is, as not positivism), and the premise of the research as outlined at the start of this chapter (insight into local students' experiences of intercultural interactions). I realised that the study's primary research question did assume an element of positivism, in that the key constructs it was investigating (including positive intercultural interactions and local students) were positioned as discrete and definable (in that they were not construed to be something else), and needing explanation. My reflections then extended to the study's data analyses, and the choices that were made vis-à-vis categorising data. This research is laden with categories including local, non-local, mono-cultural, bi-cultural-western, and bi-cultural non-western students; and 'deep'-level or 'shallow'-level experiences. The use of categories in this research was driven by the researchers' desires to 'make sense' of the data, and help to reveal patterns in it. However, one may question whether or not this very process of categorisation and classification, based on the identification of shared properties or qualities, represented in part some form of essentialism. Reconciling these two seemingly contrasting ontological positions was important. Therefore, while preferring an ontological and epistemological framework that positioned participants' meanings, understandings and constructions of positive intercultural interactions as the primary phenomena of this study, it was important to reject a form of constructivism that was going to "reduce all differences to distinctions" (Goldenberg, 2007, p. 147).

A conceptual 'fit' for such views were found in the tenets of Trowler's 'moderate essentialism', particularly its notion of ontological strata, which recognises that an object or phenomenon can involve a duality of ontological positions. As Trowler observes: "viewed from a distance [phenomena] may have certain common characteristics, but viewed close up those characteristics crumble in the analytical hand" (Trowler, 2013, p. 4). It was felt that this conceptualisation resonated with the philosophical assumptions underpinning this research, providing a methodological framework that enabled intercultural interactions to be studied at a local level through a constructivist lens, yet also recognising a higher-order level of essentialism. Specifically, the adoption of an ontological strata lens allowed for a constructivist analysis of positive intercultural interactions (this enabling their heterogeneity, divergence and complexity to be revealed) in a framework that did not deny the existence of a broader commonality, or essence, of the key constructs within the research.

Dualism Number 2: Qualitative or Quantitative?

A primary focus of this study was determining the salience, meanings and feelings students assigned to their positive intercultural interaction experiences. Accordingly, qualitative methods were adopted as it was believed that they would glean richer, more nuanced insight into student experience than could be achieved through other methods (Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007; Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Dixon et al., 2005; Frost et al., 2010; Gitlin, 2008; Halualani, 2010a; Polkinghorne, 2005). As such, principal sources of data in this research were transcriptions of one-on-one, face-to-face qualitative interviews, with their primary purpose to gain insight into participants' subjective meanings, feelings and reactions to their positive intercultural interaction experiences, in effect probing beyond the objective qualities of interactions, or the 'what can be seen'.

However, interview transcripts were not the only source of data employed in this research. These were supplemented by students' graphical deconstructions of their identity using an identity map instrument that was developed by the researchers specifically for this study. Presented in the fourth paper, this instrument prompted students to reflect on and describe their identity to the interviewer, while assigning salience to each of the identity dimensions discussed. The identity map instrument served three primary functions. First, completed maps provided a vehicle through which students could communicate ideas, understanding and relationships that might be difficult to elicit, and would therefore complement data gleaned through interview text (Crilly, Blackwell, & Clarkson, 2006; Umoquit, Tso, Burchett, & Dobrow, 2011). Owing to the complexity of the constructs being studied (that is, students' perceptions of the salience of, and meanings assigned to, multiple dimensions of their identity), it was felt that a completed identity map had the potential to better communicate, or represent, messages that might be difficult for students to articulate verbally. Second, and related, it was felt that the identity map instrument could function as a visual prompt for students, potentially aiding and guiding their recall and reflections "in ways that traditional data might not" (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009, p. 77). Third, the instrument allowed identity to be represented, and therefore explored empirically, as a multidimensional construct (Jones, 2009).

Yet, as I reflected on the identity map instrument, I began to question my perception of it as a qualitative instrument, and reflected on its purpose in a study predicated on a qualitative, constructivist epistemology and ontology. The identity map instrument's design, premised on students assigning salience to each of their identity

dimensions, produced data that placed a value on identity dimensions that could be measured and compared. That is, it could be quantified. The data analysis process adopted to interpret the identity maps compounded this emerging tension as it also involved weighting, ranking and calculating the frequency of data: all inherently processes of quantification, and suggesting a 'quantitative' element to the data.

This awareness caused me to reflect more broadly on data analysis decisions employed in other papers included in the present research, particularly the decision to 'quantitize' (Sandelowski et al., 2009) or numerically "translate" (Sandelowski et al., 2009, p. 208) qualitative data in Paper 3. Within this process, ordinals were applied to coded (text) data to reflect qualitative differences in levels of experience within the dimensions being scrutinised, thereby allowing patterns in the data to be more easily identified. In this respect the utilisation of ordinals was consistent with a qualitative methodology. However, the subsequent step in the data analysis involved totalling ordinal values to calculate an overall 'aggregate saliency' weighting for each participant. Thus, data became quantifiable. At this stage, I started reflecting on how I could reconcile these analytic approaches – qualitative and quantitative - within an overarching qualitative methodology. I began to see the potential of combining methodological approaches for eliciting different insights and perspectives than might be achieved from a purely quantitative or qualitative approach. Madill and Gough's suggestion that researchers explore the space of "potential permeability" (2008, p. 254) of the quantitative-qualitative boundary resonated well with the methods adopted in this thesis, and I recognised that my thinking of methodologies had undergone a paradigm shift. No longer was I conceptualising them as alternatives to 'choose' between. Rather, I was seeing them as multiple lenses through which a research problem could be observed.

Dualism Number 3: Objectivity or Subjectivity (and Rigour)

The methodology selected for this present research recognised student voice as a central phenomenon, with an underlying premise that analysing student accounts and self-reports of their intercultural interactions would yield meaningful and authentic insight into how students perceived, constructed and ascribed meanings to them. But this posed a challenge: how could 'meaningful and authentic insight' be achieved in a study that adopts a qualitative methodology, is framed by a constructivist epistemology and ontology, and involves methods that are inherently subjective. The paradox inherent in this pursuit is the focus of extensive conceptual commentary (Bryman, 1984; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2008; Madill & Gough, 2008; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Patton,

1999; Salomon, 1991), Onwuegbuzie and Leech even framing the question “Validity and Qualitative Research: An Oxymoron?” (2007, p. 233). Yet, paralleling an extensive body of literature exploring how validity can be embedded into qualitative research (Carter & Little, 2007; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2008; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011), is an equally diverse range of opinions as to how validity and rigour should be operationalised (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). While the breadth of means to achieve this objective could be considered overwhelming, common to many frameworks are the concepts of ‘logical consistency’ (Carter & Little, 2007; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2008), reflexivity, and replication (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The latter is an inherently objectivist concept, decreeing that the procedures, methods and decisions occurring throughout the research process are able to be recreated and results reproduced. By contrast, the first two concepts (logical consistency and reflexivity) argue that rigour is achieved when there is conceptual and operational consistency across research aims, methodology and method, and when the researcher recognises their subjective role in qualitative research.

These former tenets had implications for the data collection and analysis processes adopted in this research. To address the tenet of logical consistency, the research recognised the criticality of the interview for the generation of “quality data” (Roulston, 2014, p. 202), while remaining cognisant of its subjective underpinning. The interview was seen as a co-creation of the interviewer and interviewee, each co-shaping the responses of the other, and therefore the data generated. Accordingly, the researchers’ roles in not just generating the data, but also interpreting and presenting it needed to be acknowledged and considered throughout the research process. However, these considerations proved a source of much internal reflection. I began to question how possible it was to authentically ‘give voice’ to participants, when I found myself concurring with Fine’s observation that any analysis of interviewee text ultimately involves “carrying out unacknowledged pieces of narrative evidence that we [the researcher/s] select, edit, and deploy to our arguments” (1992, p. 7). Further was the recognition that even the original data source – the student’s recollection and account of events - is never going to be fully ‘objective’, that it will always be subject to a student’s decisions and choices about what information to share and how to share it, this in turn shaped (and possibly constrained) by a student’s perception of the interview context, the associated “cultural scripts” (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 71) and conversational norms available to them, and their perception of how their accounts may be received. As Reis and Wheeler argue, actors’ self-reports need to be considered in

research for what they are: “personalised impressions of social activity that have been percolated, construed, and reformed through various perceptual, cognitive, and motivational processes” (1991, p. 271).

During data collection, it was critical to mediate these influences by creating a safe, non-threatening interview context that was conducive to sharing personal experiences, and that would also elicit deep and affective responses. The process was guided by Alvesson and Deetz’s conceptualisation of a qualitative interview as a “space for negotiation of meanings [and] mutual understanding” (2000, p. 71), and Wolgemuth et al.’s (2015) empirical observation that semi-structured interviews that aimed to build rapport with participants were actually perceived by the participants to be personally-beneficial and positive experiences. Accordingly, techniques such as showing interest in and validating what students were sharing (Wolgemuth et al., 2015) were adopted, as well as letting the pace and flow of the interview be largely guided by the student (Kvale, 1995). An effort was made to minimise the researcher’s input in the interview (to allow the student more time to express themselves), and clarification of interviewee’s statements were sought when needed (Roulston, 2014). Gentle probes were also employed when wishing to pursue a theme introduced by a student in more detail (Patton, 2002).

In addition to creating a context conducive to the generation of deep, meaningful, ‘quality’ data, rigorous data analysis methods were adopted that would protect the integrity of participants’ accounts. For example, coding frameworks were developed, and member-checking and inter-coder reliability was employed, in efforts to ensure that decisions vis-à-vis data analysis were transparent, thoroughly explained, and, where appropriate, justified. Accordingly, every paper in this research presents a thorough, step-by-step account of procedures and data analysis methods adopted, and these are grounded in broader overviews of the methodological assumptions underpinning them.

However, in spite of these efforts to objectify the research process, on a personal level I continued to see the inherently subjective and value-laden nature of the research process. I was cognisant that all steps of the design and performance of the research were tangibly and implicitly shaped by researchers, and decisions made by them as a collective. I also recognised that, even within a collaborative research process, I (as did all members of the research team) brought my own axiological, epistemological and ontological assumptions, as well as my previous life and academic experiences, that shaped how I engaged with the research team and broader process at both a conscious

and sub-conscious level. In my own situation, this included a decade of experience as an adviser and advocate to international students at two medium-sized Australian universities. I reflected on the possibility that these experiences and the insights they afforded were framed largely through the accounts of the international students I worked with, and may have shaped my own perception of the campus reality of intercultural interactions. While I consciously sought to mediate against these experiences shaping how I approached this research, I began to question the ability of any researcher (each a product of their own histories, experiences and belief systems that will shape their thinking at an automatic, implicit level) to fully suspend their prior beliefs, knowledge and assumptions during the research process and continually reflected on researcher situatedness, and the implications of this for eventual research outcomes. Yet, rather than seeking to find the ‘answer’ to this tension, I considered this awareness a quality of researcher reflexivity (Berger, 2015). That is, rather than seeking (or rejecting) the notion of, “an objective knowledge of an objective social reality” (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 63), I was instead acknowledging subjectivity, and situatedness, as two constants in the research process, and saw the benefit of researcher collaboration, that is the ‘bringing together’ of these elements within a broader research team as a means to enhance research validity.

Summary

In sum, the three methodological dualisms identified and discussed in this chapter not only shaped the intrinsic assumptions, aims, and methods of the present research, they also provided conceptual, ontological and epistemological foundation that contributed to its richness.

Method

Participants and research site

The research site was a medium-sized (enrolment n=18,101) suburban university in a major Australian city. At the time the research was conducted, the 13.94% of the University’s onshore students were international students (that is, students studying in Australia on a student visa). Within the local student population (that is, students classified as Australian citizens), 2.97% of students spoke English as a second language. The university did not have any records regarding ethnic identity or race of its students. However, in the year that this research was conducted, 27.16% of the university’s local students identified as being born in a country other than Australia. Therefore, when analysing both domestic (local) and international students, 37.85% of the institution’s total on-shore student population was born in a country other than Australia.

Participants were first-year students enrolled in business, communications or science courses. Owing to the mediating role that different academic disciplines can play in shaping intercultural interactions that occur within them (Kimmel & Volet, 2010a, 2010b), researchers sought participants across a cross-section of subject areas, so as to gain insight that was more representative of the broader campus, and not one academic area.

Participants were recruited during the first 2 weeks of the academic year. Researchers attended major lectures for a range of courses, and handed out leaflets that introduced the research, its key objectives, and inviting participation. Students volunteered for the study, and were provided with a small book token (AUD\$15) to thank them for their involvement.

Procedure

Students were interviewed on two separate occasions. The first interview occurred in the first 3-5 weeks of the academic year, the second interview after the conclusion of the first study period (4 months later). Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants. The first interview solicited from students' insights into their early intercultural experiences at the university, including their perceptions of the university campus, their friendship groups, in-class experiences, and recounting detail of positive intercultural interactions they had experienced on campus. Students were also asked how they would describe their cultural identity. The second interview solicited similar information, although supplemented these questions with an exercise in which students were asked to describe their identity across two contexts using a visual aid. This aid, or identity map, is described in detail, and rationale for its inclusion provided, in Paper 3. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim.

As the interviews invited students to recount positive intercultural experiences,, care was taken to ensure that students were provided with the opportunity to debrief on the interview with the interviewer directly after the interview. Students were also given information on the University's counselling service, in case the interview process triggered a negative emotional response. Most students availed themselves of the opportunity to debrief with the interviewer, with the majority describing the interview as a beneficial learning experience.

Data Analysis

Details regarding data analysis are included in each of the four papers.

A Table Summary of Methodological and Method decisions

The four papers that present the research findings of this thesis are grounded in differing methodologies and methods, these are outlined in each of the papers. However, a summary of key theories and methods adopted in each paper is captured in Table 1.

Table 1.*Summary of methodology, methods and theoretical framings for the 4 empirical papers*

Paper No.	Participant Details	Concepts	Theoretical Lenses	Analysis	Multidimensionality and multi layering
	n Ethnicity				
1	25 Monocultural <i>n</i> =12 Bicultural Western <i>n</i> =5 Bicultural Non-Western <i>n</i> =8	Conceptualisation of Culture Perception of Diversity Bicultural Identity Ethnorelativism Ethnocentrism	Social Identity Theory (intergroup permeability) (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 1993)	Qualitative methodology grounded in constructivist epistemology and ontology Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)	Multilayered operationalisation of the 3 constructs (conceptualisations of culture, perceptions of diversity, and experience of intercultural interaction) across a continuum of experience
2	10 All Monolingual and Monocultural	Context Agency Structure Field Habitus Capital	Social Field Theory (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992)	Phenomenological epistemology and ontology (Finlay, 2013). Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)	Multilayered operationalisation of field to encompass 3 different domains of social activity
3	19 Monocultural and Monolingual <i>n</i> =9 Monolingual and Multicultural <i>n</i> =6 Multilingual and Multicultural <i>n</i> =4	Intercultural Transformation Intergroup contact Agency Context Duration of intercultural interactions Affect Self-disclosure Cultural interest	Intergroup Contact Theory (Allport, 1954) Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007) Anxiety Uncertainty Management Theory (Gudykunst, 2005) Intercultural Transformation Learning Theory (Mezirow, 2009; Taylor, 1994) Attribution bias (Shelton, Richeson, & Bergsieker, 2009) Social Penetration Theory (Taylor & Altman, 1987)	Constructivist epistemology and ontology Coding scheme developed using a mixed, integrated qualitative methodology (Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007) that employed deductive and inductive processes. Quantitization (Sandelowski, Voils, & Knafl, 2009) of coding into 3 levels of experience for each dimension	Multidimensional conceptualisation of intercultural interactions Multilayered conceptualisation of each dimension across level of depth of experience
4	19 Monocultural and Monolingual <i>n</i> =9 Monolingual and Multicultural <i>n</i> =6 Multilingual and Multicultural <i>n</i> =4	Ethnic Identity	Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007) Model of Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney, Jacoby, & Silva, 2007; Phinney & Ong, 2007)	Mixed methods methodology Phenomenologically-informed, constructivist epistemology and ontology Text data from interviews supplemented with pictorial data from identity maps. Analysis included Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) Quantitizing (Sandelowski et al., 2009)	Multidimensional operationalisation of identity across 9 dimensions (including age, gender, ethnicity) Multi-theoretical conceptualisation and operationalisation of identity Multilayered operationalisation of identity according to salience students assigned to it

Reading from left to right, Table 1 summarises key information pertaining to the participants, concepts explored, theoretical lenses employed, and analysis procedures adopted in each of the four papers. The final column highlights operational and conceptual multidimensional and multilayered qualities in each of the papers. This table is intended to assist the reader in engaging with and interpreting information provided in this thesis summary document, and the four empirical papers that form its appendices.

Small things start us in new ways of thinking

V.S. Naipaul, *A Bend in the River*

Chapter 3: An Overview of the Empirical Papers

Paper 1

Colvin, C., Volet, S., & Fozdar, F. (2014). Local university students and intercultural interactions: conceptualising culture, seeing diversity and experiencing interactions. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 33(3), 440-455.

The summary of Paper 1 below is a condensed version of the full manuscript. Pertinent sections of the introduction, methodology, findings and discussion section have been extracted to provide a synopsis of the paper. The full, accepted version of the published manuscript, including tables and figures, is provided in Appendix A.

Research Aims and Introduction

The empirical study reported in this paper examined local students' conceptualisations, perceptions and constructions of, respectively, culture, diversity, and positive intercultural interactions, and the relationships between these phenomena. The selection of culture and diversity as research 'objects' was predicated on an ontological understanding that culture, by definition, is a salient quality of intercultural interactions, yet students' understandings of these concepts, and how they relate to actual intercultural interaction experiences, has only received limited empirical attention. Similarly, this paper's focus on the early positive intercultural interaction experiences of first-year students complements emerging literature highlighting the importance of university students' early experiences and connections for the development of attitudes toward, and experiences of, further intercultural interactions. Finally, this paper recognised local students as a culturally heterogeneous body, and sought to identify patterns of relationship between a student's cultural background and their constructions and experiences of the three identified research phenomena.

Specific research questions guiding the empirical study were:

1. What are the relationships between how first-year local students conceptualise culture, perceive diversity and experience intercultural interactions?
2. What is the role of cultural background in shaping first-year local students' conceptualisations of culture, perceptions of diversity and intercultural interaction experiences?

Methodology, Methods and Procedures

This paper was grounded within a social constructivist ontology and epistemology (Flick, von Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004) and sought to elicit, from students'

self-reports, their perceptions, understandings and experiences of the three research phenomena.

Participants were first-year local students (n=25) recruited from Business, Engineering and Communication classes in the first few weeks of university. Care was taken to ensure that the sample reflected the university's broader demographic (age and gender) profile.

Students took part in semi-structured individual interviews, where they were asked to recount a positive interaction that they had been involved with on campus that involved 'a person or persons from a cultural background different from your own'. Students were invited to reflect on how the interaction occurred, the emotions they felt during it, what made it positive, and what factors they believed enabled the interaction. Students were also asked about their perceptions of diversity on campus, their broader attitudes toward culture and diversity, and their social interaction patterns on campus.

The questions that were asked therefore guided students to understand intercultural interactions as involving an element of cultural difference. Beyond this question, however, care was taken to not impose any pre-determined definitions or interpretations of intercultural interactions, culture or diversity on to participants.

All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed (verbatim), and then analysed inductively using Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis approach.

Results

Relationships between how first-year local students conceptualise culture, perceive diversity and experience intercultural interactions.

There was considerable variation in how local students conceptualised culture, perceived diversity and experienced intercultural interactions, with accounts suggesting an even distribution across a continuum of understanding for each of the three phenomena. For instance, students' conceptualisations of culture ranged from essentialist, ethnocentric, and reified interpretations, to others that suggested a more fluid, intrinsic and ethnorelative understanding. Similarly, perceptions of diversity varied from those in which homogeneity, ethnic and cultural segregation and group impermeability were present, to other accounts in which the cultural diversity was considered to be more heterogeneous, integrated, and permeable. Finally, accounts of positive intercultural interactions also suggested a range of experience, with some students recounting experiences that appeared fragmented and shallow. By contrast, other students described encounters that appeared to be more sustained, and suggested an emerging depth to them.

Significant, though, was the emergence in the data of systematic patterns of relationship between the three phenomena. Students who reported reified, ethnocentric conceptualisations of culture generally perceived diversity as homogeneous and segregated, and typically reported positive intercultural interactions that were fragmented and shallow. Conversely, students reporting dynamic, ethnorelative conceptualisations of culture tended to perceive diversity as heterogeneous and permeable, and described interactions suggesting emerging depth. Thus, the findings suggest that how a student conceptualises culture and perceives diversity is linked to how they experience their engagement with them.

Role of cultural background in shaping first-year local students' conceptualisations of culture, perceptions of diversity and intercultural interaction experiences.

To determine the role of cultural background in shaping first-year local students' conceptualisations, participants were first divided into three groups: a group identifying as Australian only (Monocultural), a group identifying a bicultural involving a Western culture (Bicultural-Western) (for instance, German-Australian), and a group identifying as bicultural, yet involving a non-Western culture (Bicultural-non-Western) (for instance, Vietnamese-Australian). When results for Bicultural-Western and Bicultural-non-Western students were aggregated, similar patterns of experience were revealed across both monocultural and bicultural students. However, when results for bicultural students were disaggregated to identify Bicultural-Western experiences as distinct from those of Bicultural-non-Western students, Bicultural-non-Western students were found to report deeper level conceptualisations of culture, perceptions of diversity, and intercultural experience than their Bicultural-Western counterparts. Further, as a group, Bicultural Western students reported shallower levels of experience than their Monocultural peers. While only involving a small sample, these findings suggested a need for intercultural interaction research to consider the mediating role that participants' cultural backgrounds, and even cultural distance, can play in shaping intercultural interaction experiences.

Discussion

This paper's finding of relationships between how students conceptualise culture, perceive diversity, and experience intercultural interactions in their very first weeks of study on a university campus suggests that first year local students arrive at university with cultural backgrounds, perspectives and understandings that play a role in shaping how they will engage with the intercultural interaction opportunities afforded to

them on a multicultural university campus. While the paper found a relationship between students' self-defined cultural background and depth of intercultural conceptualisation and experience, this relationship was not consistent, lending support to Bennett's (1993) claim that exposure to diversity is, of itself, not enough to develop intercultural perspectives. Rather, he posits that the level of complexity with which one construes the intercultural event is likely to determine how deeply it is experienced.

These findings highlight the power of students' conceptualisations, perceptions, and understanding of diversity in mediating or militating against intercultural interactions occurring. In contrast with much literature that notes the power of intercultural interactions to heighten intercultural understanding and awareness, this paper presents intercultural self-awareness as an important antecedent to interactions and suggests that institutions wishing to enhance intercultural mixing on campus could explore designing interventions that will raise local students' awareness of themselves as cultural agents.

Finally, while this paper explored intercultural interactions occurring on a university campus, it did not scrutinise the mediating role of context in either affording or constraining interactions. This theme was addressed in the second paper.

Paper 2

Colvin, C., Fozdar, F., & Volet, S. (2015). Intercultural interactions of mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students in small group learning activities: a Bourdieusian analysis. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 36(3), 414-433.

The summary of Paper 2 below is a condensed version of the full manuscript. Pertinent sections of the introduction, methodology, findings and discussion section have been extracted to provide a synopsis of the paper. The full, accepted version of the published manuscript, including tables and figures, is provided in Appendix B.

Research Aims and Introduction

This paper sought to gain insight into how local students perceived, understood and experienced intercultural interactions as they occurred within small group learning environments on campus. It focused not just on how students saw and understood their intercultural interactions, but also how they perceived the context within which they occurred, that is, small group learning activities occurring on a university campus. In addition to exploring the nature and role of the internal, intrapersonal dispositions that students brought to the interaction in shaping their experiences, this paper elicited how, and in what way, the context within which the interactions occurred may have afforded or constrained students' intercultural interactions.

Bourdieu's Social Field Theory was adopted for this research. This theory's scaffolding of social practice into the three interconnected, interdependent concepts of field, habitus and capital resonated with this paper's objectives. According to Bourdieu, fields are autonomous social spaces in which social practice occurs. Significant to this conceptualisation is that each field has its own 'logic', or rules and roles that inform behaviour within them. Thus, the more one understands and follows the 'logic' governing the field, the more readily one will be able to engage with it. However, Bourdieu also recognises that one's participation in a field is further influenced by the resources and knowledge (capital) and intrapersonal dispositions (habitus) one brings to, and the value afforded them by, the field. Therefore, the field is not experienced equally by all within it. Bourdieu's bringing together of field, habitus and capital into one interdependent and recursive framework of social action allowed the interplay of the broader structural, contextual, and also intrapersonal, dispositional elements of intercultural interactions to be scrutinised within the context of a university campus.

In this study, field was operationalised as small group learning activities, including class discussions, group work activities and group assessments. Two specific research questions were generated:

1. How does the field of small group learning activities, and the capital valued within it, structure students' intercultural interactions?
2. How does the habitus that students bring to the field mediate intercultural interactions?

Methodology, Methods and Procedures

A phenomenological methodology that would allow the emergence of “the field as collectively seen by participants at the time, rather than viewed from without or in hindsight” (Maton, 2005, p. 61) was adopted. Owing to Paper 1's finding that a student's cultural background can play a role in shaping students' cultural experiences, the sample group for Paper 2 consisted solely of mono-cultural, mono-lingual students. While the sample size of this study was small (n=10), it was deemed appropriate for an in-depth, qualitative analysis of a complex social phenomenon such as intercultural interactions (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Research participants were involved in two semi-structured interviews, one at the beginning of their first academic year, the other half way through the academic year. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed emergent themes to be explored, and a deeper level of response to be gleaned than might have been achieved through more structured questioning methods. Themes explored in the interviews included reflections on intercultural interactions within and outside of the university classroom, and perceptions of how interactions varied across formal and informal contexts.

The first step of the analysis involved thematic analysis of students' accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2006), in which qualitative themes pertaining to students' perceptions, conceptualisations and experiences were identified. These included observations about language, seating patterns, group work, and attitudes toward diversity. In the second step, data from the identified themes was assigned to Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus. Material coded to field involved statements and observations about structural aspects, material coded to habitus involved personal orientations, and statements assigned to capital were statements about social, material or intellectual aspects considered beneficial in the field. The third step, required by research question 1, involved analysing material coded to field to identify particular themes and patterns within it.

Results

How does the field of small group learning activities, and the capital valued within it, structure students' intercultural interactions?

The field was found to be a multidimensional space, involving the interplay of three separate areas of activity, each operating to different logics, and valuing different capital, yet all contributing to the overall functioning of the field of small group learning activities. Accordingly, each of these spaces was conceptualised as a domain that existed within the overarching field. These three domains are described in turn.

1. Pedagogical domain.

Two themes emerged within the pedagogical domain as having influence on intercultural interactions: the perceived importance of active verbal participation in small group learning activities, and, related, the need for English-language proficiency. Students perceived the logic of the pedagogical domain to encourage interactions with peers who were confident and outspoken, and had high levels of English proficiency.

2. Physical domain.

This contained tangible institutional structures that influenced interactions. Again, two key themes were identified: the demographics of the classroom (that is, the number of students in classes, and the level of visible cultural diversity), and seating arrangements. There was a perception among students that small class sizes were more conducive to intercultural interactions, with the suggestion that larger social groups appeared more socially threatening. However, there was also an understanding among students that seating patterns formed at the beginning of the year tended to remain fixed throughout the year, and that these patterns exerted a strong influence over work group formations.

3. Social domain.

The social domain encompassed the social engagements in the field, and the logic governing these. Themes emerging as impacting intercultural interactions included a sense that interactions were bound by, or limited to, the context in which they were formed, as well as a perception that intercultural interactions were not to be actively pursued. Both of these themes were presented as field effects, rather than a personal preference.

Thus, students perceived the field of small group learning activities to comprise three domains each with their own logics that each played a role in shaping intercultural interactions occurring within it. Further, each of the domains favoured capital (such as

being a native English speaker) that tended to privilege the local monocultural, monolingual student.

How does the habitus that students bring to the field mediate intercultural interactions?

The second research question explored the mediating role that an individual's habitus plays in co-shaping intercultural interactions. Students' accounts revealed a range of personal dispositions that either enabled or constrained interactions. These included differences in motivation, intercultural efficacy, and perceptions of, and attitudes toward, cultural diversity. However, there was no uniformity of experience with regard to how the logics of the field interacted with an individual's habitus. For some students, the constraining effects of the field were dominated by a habitus that was 'enabling' and conducive to deeper positive intercultural interactions. However, and by contrast, for other students, structural, 'field' effects played a dominating role in shaping their interactions.

Discussion

The application of Bourdieu's field theory was found useful as it allowed intercultural interactions to be studied as situated, complex and multidimensional phenomena shaped by multiple factors at both the individual and structural levels. Monocultural and monolingual students were revealed to be cultural agents who perceived intercultural interactions to be governed by implicit and explicit rules that not only appeared to militate against positive interactions occurring, but that further privileged their position within the field, allowing them to control the intercultural agenda. Further, viewing the phenomena through Bourdieu's lens allowed the situated nature of intercultural interactions on campus to be revealed, highlighting the critical role that university teaching, learning and social experiences play in shaping outcomes.

Paper 2 therefore extended on the knowledge generated in Paper 1. Whereas Paper 1 focused on students' attitudes toward and perceptions of culture and cultural diversity, and how these related to intercultural interactions, Paper 2 sought to gain insight into how intrapersonal factors and dispositions intersected with broader structural elements to co-shape intercultural interaction outcomes. Both papers highlighted significant variance in students' intercultural interaction experiences. However, the focus of these papers was primarily on elements considered to precede interactions – the cognitive, dispositional and structural elements that co-shape them. By contrast, Paper 3 focused specifically on actual intercultural interactions, and the identification of the various qualities and features that define them.

Paper 3

Colvin, C., & Volet, S. (2014). Scrutinising local students' accounts of positive intercultural interactions: A multidimensional analysis. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 42, 77-92.

The summary of Paper 3 below is a condensed version of the full manuscript. Pertinent sections of the introduction, methodology, findings and discussion section have been extracted to provide a synopsis of the paper. The full, accepted version of the published manuscript, including tables and figures, is provided in Appendix C.

Research Aims and Introduction

This paper scrutinised students' perceptions of the qualities and features inherent within positive intercultural interactions occurring on a university campus. Rather than focusing on the processes, affordances or constraints surrounding such interactions, this paper sought to explore how positive intercultural interactions were conceptualised by students, and glean qualitative insight into how these insights varied across a spectrum of experiences. It also examined the relationships between positive intercultural interactions and intercultural transformation outcomes.

This paper was predicated on a conceptualisation of intercultural interactions as complex and multidimensional phenomena, and they were analysed as such using a coding framework developed by the researchers.

Specific research questions guiding the study were:

1. How the specific dimensions of intercultural interactions identified in the paper's coding framework (that is, agency, context, duration, affect, and self-disclosure) were represented in students' accounts of positive intercultural interactions?
2. To what extent students' accounts of positive intercultural interactions displayed consistently deep or shallow experiences, that is, reflected the same degree of salience across dimensions?
3. What meaningful patterns of intercultural interactions could be identified in relation to the achievement of intercultural transformation?

Methodology, Methods and Procedure

This paper was grounded in an epistemology and ontology that recognised positive intercultural interactions as “interactionally and socially constructed” (Kecskes,

2013, p. 39), multidimensional phenomena. Critical to the design and analysis of this paper was the development of a coding scheme that would allow intercultural interactions to be analysed as multidimensional, and reveal qualitative differences in intercultural interaction experiences across the research sample. This coding scheme was developed by combining a deductive, theoretically driven approach (informed by literature review) with an inductive approach, in which themes were able to emerge through participant accounts. Through this process, six dimensions were incorporated into the final coding scheme: agency, affect, duration, context, and self-disclosure (all deductively generated, based on literature review), and cultural interest (inductively generated from the data). Participants (n=19) were culturally heterogeneous local students, including students identifying as monocultural and monolingual (n=9), monolingual and multicultural (n=6), and multilingual and multicultural (n=4).

Each of the six dimensions in the coding was operationalised across three levels of experience, ranging from low to heightened, and ordinal values were assigned to each of these levels, consistent with Sandelowski, Voils and Knafls' (2009) process of 'quantitizing'. The ordinal values were intended to facilitate pattern identification, particularly in relation to depth of experience. The coding scheme was piloted before being applied, and two researchers independently coded the data using the scheme, with a 74.4% agreement rate.

Results

Dimensions of intercultural interactions represented in accounts of positive intercultural interactions.

Qualitative differences in the perceived saliency of the dimensions were found across students' accounts with evidence of substantial variations in the depth of experience within each of the six dimensions in the coding scheme.

Consistency in depth of experience across dimensions of intercultural interactions.

Consistency in depth of experience was found across most dimensions of the intercultural interactions. Within intercultural interactions experienced at a shallow level, five target dimensions (context, affect, self-disclosure, cultural interest and duration) were experienced at a shallow level. Similarly, intercultural interactions experienced at a deep level also displayed deeper levels of experience for the same target dimension (context, affect, self-disclosure, cultural interest and duration). By contrast, no consistency was found between the depth of an interaction, and the level of agency (operationalised as initiating an interaction) demonstrated within it. Further, the

level at which agency was exercised was not consistent with the level at which the other target dimensions were experienced.

Patterns of intercultural interaction experiences leading to the achievement, or lack of, intercultural transformation.

Four patterns were identified in students' experiences of positive intercultural interactions, and intercultural transformation outcomes, with these formed by combining the level at which agency was exercised in the intercultural interaction with the level of intercultural transformation reported as arising from the interaction. The four patterns were:

1. Pattern 1: Initial shallow level of agency leading to lack of intercultural transformation
2. Pattern 2: Initial deep level of agency leading to lack of intercultural transformation
3. Pattern 3: Initial shallow level of agency leading to deep level intercultural transformation
4. Pattern 4: Initial deep level of agency leading to deep level intercultural transformation

These patterns revealed that initial deep level of agency (that is, the act of initiating an interaction) was not a necessary precursor of intercultural transformation, and that intercultural transformation could be generated in interactions in which agency was not exercised at the start, provided other target dimensions (context, affect, self-disclosure, cultural interest and duration) were experienced at deep levels. Further, even when initial agency was reported at a deep level, it did not necessarily result in intercultural transformation, with transformation outcomes again related to the depth at which the other target dimensions were experienced.

Discussion

This paper's conceptualisation and operationalisation of positive intercultural interactions as multidimensional allowed them to be studied as complex phenomena, and lent empirical support for future research that adopts a multidimensional lens. Noteworthy were the paper's findings vis-à-vis agency, with this found to be the least congruent dimension among both deep and shallow level interactions. The four identified patterns of relationship between agency and intercultural transformation showed that the level of agency could be both congruent with, and inverse from, the level of intercultural transformation achieved, suggesting that when there was limited agency, deep level positive intercultural interactions could still emerge provided other

dimensions were present. While there is extensive literature highlighting the potential of intercultural transformation to be achieved through experiences involving international travel (Savicki, 2008), these findings highlight the potential for intercultural transformation to be generated from ‘everyday’ classroom experiences occurring on a student’s home campus. Also, while the findings suggest a relationship between the depth of a positive intercultural interaction and the achievement of intercultural transformation, no causal relationship between the two phenomena could be claimed. That is, positive intercultural interactions experienced at a deep level cannot be considered as a predictor of transformational outcomes, nor can an interaction experienced at a shallow level be considered a precursor of transformational outcomes.

Finally, this paper’s development of a qualitative coding instrument provides a vehicle by which intercultural interactions can be scrutinised across multiple dimensions and at differing levels of depth. While much conceptual and theoretical literature highlights the importance of positive intercultural interactions for intercultural development, little literature has operationalised intercultural interactions as multidimensional, nor empirically tested relationships between depth of intercultural interactions and their antecedents and or outcomes. Intergroup contact (Allport, 1954) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007) literature provide a strong theoretical foundation for the relationship between intergroup thinking and ethnic identity and the depth of intercultural interaction experiences. Paper 4 explores these relationships, building on findings generated in this paper through the application of the multidimensional intercultural interaction coding framework.

Paper 4

Colvin, C., & Volet, S. (under review). A multi-theoretical analysis of the relationship between local students' perceptions of ethnic identity and accounts of positive intercultural interactions.

The summary of Paper 4 below is a condensed version of the full manuscript. Pertinent sections of the introduction, methodology, findings and discussion section have been extracted to provide a synopsis of the paper. The full version of the manuscript, including tables and figures, is provided in Appendix D.

Research Aims and Introduction

This paper adopted a multi-theoretical lens to explore ethnic identity's role in affording or constraining intercultural interactions on a university campus. Specific aims were to establish the nature of relationships between local students' conceptualisations of their ethnic identity, the salience they assigned to it, and the depth of their intercultural interaction experiences. The focus of this paper on the role of ethnic identity in shaping the intercultural interactions of local, 'majority' students complements a comprehensive body of literature examining the role of ethnic identity in shaping intercultural interactions of non-local, minority students (Holmes, 2005; Phinney et al., 2007). While this literature has provided insight into processes surrounding ethnicity's relationship to intercultural outcomes, its limited focus on non-local students means that the ethnic identity processes of 'majority' local students is not well understood. Further, limited empirical attention has been given to the relationship of ethnic identity with other identity dimensions, and how these relationships might shape intercultural interactions, despite conceptual literature highlighting identity's multidimensional nature (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Accordingly, this paper adopted a multidimensional operationalisation of identity, and sought to elicit the perceived salience of ethnic identity relative to other key identity dimensions. Further, it sought to reveal how students understood and constructed the various dimensions inherent within their identity, and how these meanings, and students' perceptions of the relative salience of the different dimensions, were shaped by the context of a positive intercultural interaction occurring on a university campus.

Three research questions guided the empirical study reported in this paper:

1. What is the salience of ethnic identity relative to other dimensions within a positive intercultural interaction?

2. What is the relationship between the salience of ethnic identity and the depth of a positive intercultural interaction?
3. How do students conceptualise their ethnic identity, and how do these conceptualisations relate to the depth of positive intercultural interactions?

Methodology, Methods and Procedure

The study reported in this paper scrutinised intercultural interactions through an ethnic identity lens that integrated two separate bodies of ethnic identity research: Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007) and Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney, 1992; Phinney, 1993; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Participants were a culturally heterogeneous sample of local students (n=19), identifying as monocultural and monolingual (n=9), monolingual and multicultural (n=6), and multilingual and multicultural (n=4).

A phenomenological methodology underpinned this study, in which students' perspectives and meanings were positioned as central phenomena. In order to explore and reveal the interrelationships between ethnic identity, other identity dimensions, and intercultural interaction experiences, mixed methods were adopted in both data collection and analysis. Three data sources were utilised. The first were students' accounts of their intercultural interaction experiences; the second were graphical data elicited from identity maps; and the third were students' accounts of the meanings they assigned to ethnic identity as captured within the identity maps.

The Identity Map Instrument was developed specifically for this study, its design drawing on features of both Narvaez's (2009) 'Identities and Roles Visual Clue' and Beltman and Wosnitza's (2008) 'Circles Task' instruments. In essence, it required students to graphically deconstruct and assign indicators of salience to their identity. In this study, each student completed two maps: one unrelated to any context (in this instance students were simply asked to describe their identity), and the other situated in the context of a positive intercultural interaction occurring on a university campus. The utilisation of the Identity Map Instrument within the study provided three main functions. First, it allowed the visual capture of participants' understandings; second, it provided possible visual clues or prompts for students, possibly facilitating recall and recount; and third, it allowed identity to be scrutinised empirically as a multidimensional construct.

Data analysis involved multiple methods. First, prompted accounts of positive intercultural interactions were coded using Colvin & Volet's (2014) Intercultural Interaction Coding instrument. This instrument allowed qualitative scrutiny of

intercultural interactions across six dimensions (agency, cultural interest, context, duration, affect, and self-disclosure), before qualitative data was ‘quantitized’ (Sandelowski et al., 2009) and ordinal values were assigned to key elements of the qualitative data for each of the six identified identity dimensions. This final step allowed meaningful patterns in the data to be more readily identified, and the totalling of ordinal values generated an ‘aggregate saliency’ that indicated the level of depth at which intercultural interactions were experienced by participants relative to others in the sample.

Second, graphical data captured in the identity maps was tabulated, so as to allow the calculation of frequency and weighted frequency value for each of the identity dimensions. This process was guided by the design of the identity map, which involved three concentric circles around a central core (representing the individual’s core identity). Each circle represented different degrees of importance: the inner circle the highest level of importance, and the outer circle the least. Students were invited to place cards representing identity dimensions important to them in the most appropriate circle. Numeric values were then assigned to each of the dimension cards according to their placement. A maximum value of 3 was assigned to a card placed in the circle representing the most degree of importance, and a value of 1 to the circle representing the least level of importance. Frequency (operationalised as the number of times a dimension card was applied to a map), and weighted frequency (the total of all numeric values assigned to each of the dimension cards applied to a map) totals were then calculated. When determining the rank order salience of the identity dimensions, weighted frequency was the primary indicator. However, when the same weighted frequency was common to more than one dimension, frequency was also considered.

Third, students’ prompted accounts of meanings assigned to the ‘Ethnicity’ identity dimension card were analysed using Braun and Clark’s (2006) thematic analysis method.

Results

Research Question 1: The salience of ethnic identity relative to other identity dimensions within a positive intercultural interaction.

In identity maps not related to a particular context, personality and education emerged as the two most salient identity dimensions. Ethnic identity emerged as 8th out of 11 dimensions. In contrast, for identity maps situated within the context of a positive intercultural interaction, ethnic identity assumed heightened salience (3rd out of 11

dimensions). However, personality and education still assumed higher degrees of salience (1st and 2nd out of 11).

Research Question 2: The relationship between the depth of a positive intercultural interaction and the salience of ethnic identity.

To determine the depth at which an intercultural interaction was experienced, students' accounts of positive intercultural interactions were analysed using Colvin and Volet's qualitative coding instrument for the analysis of intercultural interactions across 6 dimensions: agency, context, affect, self-disclosure, cultural interest and duration (presented in Paper 3). Two independent coders achieved satisfactory inter-judge agreement. When data relating to the salience of identity dimensions was broken down according to the depth at which the intercultural interaction was experienced, a similar pattern to that found in research question 1 was observed. That is, in identity maps not related to a particular context, both sub-groups of students perceived education, personality, work and family to be more important identity dimensions than ethnicity. By contrast, in identity maps related to the context of a positive intercultural interaction, the salience of ethnic identity increased, ranking just after education and personality for both deep and shallow sub-groups of students. Thus ethnic identity assumed greater salience in contexts focused on culture (the interview invited students to discuss a positive intercultural interaction). However, the salience of ethnicity did not appear to vary according to the depth at which the interaction was experienced, with both sub-groups assigning the ethnicity dimension similar weightings in both contexts.

Research Question 3: Students' conceptualisations of their ethnic identity, and the nature of the relationship between those conceptualisations and the depth of their intercultural interactions.

This question was answered in two steps. First, identifying students' conceptualisations of their ethnic identity, and second, exploring relationships between these conceptualisations and the depth of students' positive intercultural interactions.

Conceptualisations of ethnic identity.

Two interpretative concepts emerged in the data. The first was ethnic identity as inherent, and the second was ethnic identity as relation to others. Both interpretative concepts reflected a broad continuum of understanding. In the first interpretative concept (ethnic identity as inherent) understandings varied from one in which ethnic identity was intrinsic to, through to extrinsic from, oneself. In the former understanding, ethnic identity was considered to be core to who one was. Yet, also common to these accounts was a sense that ethnic identity was fluid, dynamic and internally negotiated.

By contrast, the second understanding, that is, ethnic identity as extrinsic from oneself, presented ethnic identity as removed, reified and optional.

Similarly, a broad continuum of understanding emerged within the second interpretative concept (ethnic identity as relation to others). For example, while some students drew attention to cultural difference, and its role in shaping the dynamic of the interaction, other students appeared to look beyond the difference, instead focusing on the similarities they shared with their fellow interactant and how this shaped their experience.

Relationship between conceptualisations of ethnic identity, and depth of positive intercultural interactions.

Systematic patterns were found between how students conceptualised their ethnic identity, and the depth at which they experienced their positive intercultural interaction. Students who conceptualised ethnic identity as extrinsic were more likely to perceive ethnic and cultural difference as salient within a positive intercultural interaction, and typically experienced interactions at a shallow level. By contrast, students who conceptualised their ethnic identity as intrinsic to them were more likely to see beyond ethnic and cultural difference and typically experienced intercultural interactions at a deeper level.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlighted the role that ethnic identity may play in shaping the intercultural interaction experiences of local, predominantly mono-cultural, mono-lingual students. Further, and of note, the two conceptualisations of ethnic identity that emerged within this study resonated with two differing theories of ethnic identity: Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney, 2008; Phinney, 1993; Phinney & Ong, 2007) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007). Within the first interpretative concept (ethnic identity as inherent), the conceptualisation of ethnic identity as extrinsic from oneself resonates with Phinney's "diffused" ethnic identity status (Phinney & Ong, 2007, p. 479). Similarly, the conceptualisation of ethnic identity as intrinsic, reciprocal and negotiated resonates with a "mature" ethnic identity status (Phinney & Ong, 2007, p. 479). By contrast, the second interpretative concept, ethnic identity as relation to others, highlighted the mediating role that intergroup categorisation and comparison can play in shaping intercultural interactions, resonating with the tenets of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007). Therefore, and in sum, while the study reported in this paper did not find a relationship between ethnic identity

salience (as measured through quantitative data elicited from the identity maps) and depth of an intercultural interaction, it did find relationships between how a student constructed and conceptualised their ethnic identity and the depth at which they experienced an intercultural interaction. These findings suggest that students' intercultural interaction experiences were simultaneously shaped by two identity processes (developmental, and social identity), and that future research would benefit from adopting a multi-theoretical ethnic identity lens.

Finally, while the salience of ethnic identity did heighten within the context of an intercultural interaction, the identity dimensions of personality and education were consistently identified as more critical, both in situations removed from, and within the context of an intercultural interaction, this challenging the often implicit assumption inherent in intercultural interaction research that ethnic identity assumes a dominant salience over other identity dimensions.

Knowledge of self ought to be the great project of our lives. Knowing ourselves we will know others.

Ben Okri, *A Time for New Dreams*

Chapter 4: Discussion

Introduction

The findings of this thesis contribute conceptually and empirically to research exploring intercultural interactions on university campuses. Conceptually, the application of multiple conceptual, theoretical and methodological lenses in the present research allowed positive intercultural interactions to be scrutinised and analysed as complex, multidimensional and situated phenomena mediated by a multitude of cognitive, affective, agentic and contextual elements. While there is a significant body of conceptual literature highlighting the complex and multidimensional nature of intercultural interactions (Dixon et al., 2005; Nezlek & Schaafsma, 2010; Phinney, 2008), empirical literature scrutinising the phenomena as such is limited (Dixon et al., 2005), thereby denying much intercultural interaction research the full breadth and depth of insight that can be elicited through the application of multiple conceptual and theoretical lenses. By contrast, the present research allowed the interdependent relationships between mediating dimensions to be revealed and better understood.

Empirically, the focus in the present research on the intercultural experiences of local students afforded insight into a population that has been under-researched relative to their non-local counterparts (Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Volet & Jones, 2012). Indeed, the findings of the present research highlight the critical role that local students play in co-shaping intercultural interaction experiences on university campuses, and revealed insight into the interdependent and multidimensional array of dimensions that mediate their experiences. Further, the research rejected a culturally homogeneous conceptualisation of local students, instead recognising and exploring the cultural heterogeneity inherent within this population, and possible relationships between students' avowed cultural identities and their intercultural perceptions and experiences.

Another empirical contribution of the present research rests in its exploration of the qualities and features that define positive intercultural interactions. It seems extraordinary that a body of research that is so strongly grounded in theoretical frameworks premised on a (empirically-supported) (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008) relationship between a 'positive' intercultural experience and intercultural growth and transformation, has contributed little empirical scrutiny of how positive intercultural interactions actually look (Halualani, 2010a, 2010b). Further, research that does explore this issue typically elicits insight through survey items (Bowman & Park, 2014; Mak et al., 2014), or the adoption of a unidimensional

conceptual or operational lens (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Mähönen, & Liebkind, 2011). While not dismissing the contributions these methodological approaches have contributed to our understanding of the relationship between positive interactions and other intercultural interaction outcomes (for instance, surveys can be useful to reveal patterns of interactions (or lack of) by different groups and over time), as with all methods, they bring limitations that will shape their findings. For instance, the use of pre-determined survey items can subsume and deny the richness of insight that can be gleaned from eliciting students' own accounts of how they perceive, understand and experience intercultural interactions. Related, while a unidimensional operationalisation of positive intercultural interactions can afford deep insight into how specific elements or processes can co-shape or mediate intercultural interactions on campus, they do not allow the multidimensional, interdependent nature of the interactions to be revealed, nor elicit deep insight into how students' perceptions and understandings of intercultural interactions qualitatively differ. By contrast, the present research applied no pre-defined definition of what a positive intercultural interaction was, instead seeking to elicit from students' own accounts insight into their specific and unique constructions or perceptions of them.

This chapter will develop these themes. It will discuss the conceptual, empirical and educational contributions of the findings of this present research in light of contemporaneous research. Directions for future research will also be highlighted.

Conceptual and Methodological Contributions

The present research was grounded in an ontology of intercultural interactions as highly complex, multidimensional, situated, and constructed phenomena that would be best explored through research methods grounded in conceptual, theoretical, and methodological multiplicity, as well as an underlying commitment to student voice. These themes, and their implications for the present research, are discussed in turn.

Conceptual Multiplicity

The utilisation in the present research of numerous, differing conceptual lenses (including cultural identity, ethnorelativism and ethnocentrism, cultural awareness, structure and agency, and context) and theoretical paradigms ((including Bourdieu's Social Field Theory (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 2009), Intergroup Contact Theory (Allport, 1954), Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007) and Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney, 2008; Phinney, 1993; Phinney, 1992; Phinney & Ong, 2007))) not only provided different views into the data, but different

ways of seeing it, ensuring fine-grained, nuanced insight into the many and varied ways students perceived, understood and ultimately experienced intercultural interactions. Further, the decision to, on occasion, simultaneously employ different conceptual and theoretical lenses through which to scrutinise the research phenomena provided extra depth of insight. For example, the adoption of two ethnic identity lenses, Phinney's Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney, 2008; Phinney, 1993; Phinney & Ong, 2007) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007), revealed how processes from each of the two theoretical paradigms simultaneously co-shaped and mediated participants' constructions and understandings of identity and perceptions of identity salience, as well as co-shaped their intercultural interaction experiences. While much identity research is situated within one or other of these major theoretical paradigms, the findings of this study highlight the benefit of a multi-theoretical lens for eliciting and revealing the dynamic, multi-layered and complex nature of ethnic identity. Similarly, the simultaneous application of conceptual lenses informed by Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007) to scrutinise intercultural interaction outcomes, allowed the qualitative differences between intercultural interactions generating intercultural transformation and those generating positive affect to be revealed. Finally, the use of Bourdieu's thinking tools (Bourdieu, 1985, 1989; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) allowed intercultural interactions on campus to be studied as situated, complex and multilayered phenomena involving a dynamic and recursive interplay of structuring, contextual features (the field and capital), and the intrapersonal, dispositional qualities of the individuals within it (habitus). Indeed, in the present research, the application of Bourdieu's Field Theory highlighted the structuring effects of university pedagogic practice and the mediating role of habitus (or intercultural dispositions) in shaping intercultural interactions at university, and provided insight into how these contextual and intrapersonal elements intersected and co-shaped interactions.

Methodological Multiplicity

The commitment to conceptual multiplicity and multidimensionality shaped decisions pertaining to methodology and research methods. The development of a theoretically-informed and inductively-generated coding framework in the present research and its application to the analysis of students' accounts of their positive interactions enhanced the depth and rigour of the analysis process. Encompassing affective, cognitive, contextual and behavioural dimensions of intercultural interactions,

the coding scheme operationalised the depth of an interaction as involving a range of experience both across, as well as within, each dimension. There is logic to the empirical, multidimensional operationalisation of positive intercultural interactions adopted in the coding scheme, as this resonates with the ontology of intercultural interactions as complex and multidimensional that underpins the present research, and that is argued extensively in conceptual literature. Specifically, the coding framework generated three primary benefits. First, it allowed students' intercultural interaction experiences to be scrutinised across multiple contextual, intrapersonal, and affective dimensions, highlighting how students' positive intercultural interaction experiences qualitatively differed both in terms of the range and depth of experience across the dimensions. Second, and related, it allowed relationships between the dimensions within intercultural interactions and intercultural interaction outcomes to be revealed. While there is a tendency in much empirical intercultural interaction literature to apply uni-dimensional operationalisations of positive intercultural interactions (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2011), the findings of the present research demonstrate the value of operationalising an intercultural interaction as an aggregate of multiple levels of experience: a uni-dimensional operationalisation of an intercultural interaction may fail to capture its full range of experience, and therefore not accurately reflect its depth. Third, the adoption of 'quantitization' (or the numerical translation of qualitative data so as to effectively reveal patterns within it) (Sandelowski et al., 2009; Seltzer-Kelly, Westwood, & Peña-Guzman, 2012) provided a simple and effective means of capturing and reflecting levels of depth across six dimensions of intercultural interaction experience in the coding framework.

The adoption of quantitization in this thesis was driven by the desire to better understand how intercultural interaction experiences qualitatively differed across research participants. Depth of experience was a critical construct in this analysis, and quantizing student accounts provided an analytical means by which variance of experience across participants' accounts could be systematically explored. Further, the involvement of a second researcher in the development and application of the quantizing coding framework, and the adoption of inter-judge agreement, addressed the risk of one researcher's subjective interpretation shaping analysis decisions.

An Underlying Commitment to Student Voice

Common to all papers reported in this research is a commitment to student voice, and eliciting from participants, in their own words, their constructions, understandings, and experiences of not just positive intercultural interactions on

campus, but broader, intercultural-related themes (including identity and perceptions of diversity), and context. Students' accounts were solicited through qualitative, semi-structured interviews, in which the interviewer was careful to not impose pre-determined definitions of the key phenomena being researched, but instead provide an opportunity for students to describe their varied intercultural interactions through the lens of their 'everyday' language. Further, by focusing the interview on actual (perceived and personally-constructed) intercultural interactions on campus, the present research elicited insight into how interactions were actually occurring in the 'day-to-day' or "ordinary social spaces" (Harris 2013, p. 6) of campus life. In this respect, the research did not afford insight into an 'imposed', 'idealised' or "utopian" (Dixon et al., 2005) conceptualisation and operationalisation of intercultural interactions, but instead revealed insight into the divergent and varied ways interactions were perceived to be occurring "in the messiness of real life" (Halualani, 2008, p. 3). Further, by better understanding how intercultural interactions were perceived, understood and experienced in their everyday context, the present research was also able to glean insight into the mediating role of these constructions for intercultural interaction outcomes.

In sum, the methodological considerations outlined above ensured that the present research was able to reveal intercultural interactions as complex phenomena shaped by an extensive array of mediating dimensions, at the intrapersonal, intergroup and contextual levels. Discussion of these empirical findings follows.

Empirical Contributions

The findings of the present research provided empirical validation for the methodological decisions informing it, as they allowed intercultural interactions to be revealed as complex phenomena shaped by multiple intrapersonal, intergroup and contextual dimensions. These dimensions are discussed in turn.

Intrapersonal Dimensions

Intrapersonal dimensions found to play a role in mediating intercultural interactions on a university campus included a student's level of cultural awareness, cultural background, and personal agency. These are discussed in turn.

Cultural awareness.

The findings highlight the criticality of local students' perceptions of themselves as cultural agents in mediating intercultural interaction outcomes. Across the research, local students demonstrating cultural self-awareness appeared to experience deeper interactions. Further, students experiencing deeper interactions typically engaged in

intercultural interactions from a position of genuine cultural reciprocity, and acknowledged their own position as a cultural agent. For this group of students, their fellow interactant was not perceived as simply a ‘cultural other’, or someone removed and ‘different’ from them. Rather, relationships were built around perceived commonality. Cultural difference, while acknowledged, was not identified by these students as a salient feature of the intercultural interaction. Instead, this group of students engaged in subtle relationship-building processes including re-categorisation (Gaertner, 2000; Riek, Mania, Gaertner, McDonald, & Lamoreaux, 2010; Schwartz, 2007; West et al., 2009) and decategorisation (Gaertner, 2000). By contrast, students who failed to recognise themselves as cultural agents, nor acknowledged their own cultural position, appeared to experience shallower interactions. These students saw cultural difference in pronounced, reified binarisms: at its extreme was the perception that one either ‘had’, or ‘did not have’, culture. For this group of students, cultural difference was typically the defining feature of an interaction, and attempts to find commonality with fellow interactants who were perceived to be culturally ‘different’ was limited. While the present research did not seek to focus on perceptions of cultural difference, and how these related to intercultural interaction outcomes, it consistently found that even subtle variance in how students ‘saw’ difference could represent, and possibly generate, very different levels of intercultural engagement.

Cultural background.

Related to cultural awareness, a relationship was found between a student’s cultural background and their conceptualisation of culture, perception of diversity, and the depth of their early interaction experiences. However, this relationship was not linear. For this analysis, participants were categorised according to how they identified at the time of the interview: bicultural Western, bicultural non-Western, and monocultural. There was evidence that students identifying as bicultural non-Western generally conceptualised culture in ethnorelativist terms and reported a greater incidence of deep intercultural interactions than both their Western bicultural, and monocultural colleagues. While a growing body of conceptual (Bennett, 1993) and empirical research (Harrison, 2012; Summers & Volet, 2008; Volet, 1999) points to a relationship between a student’s previous cultural exposure, and their actual intercultural interaction experiences, the findings in the present research that Western bicultural students were more likely than their non-Western bicultural and monocultural peers to experience intercultural interactions at a shallow level was not expected. While there was no attempt to establish reasons for divergence in experiences

between Western and non-Western participants (although theoretical explanation might stem from Ward's concept of cultural distance (Ward & Searle, 1991)), the findings suggest that cultural background alone does not necessarily pre-dispose one for positive, and deep level intercultural interactions, and that this construct would benefit from more nuanced scrutiny.

Agency.

The present research also provided insight into the role of student agency (operationalised as the initiation of an intercultural interaction) in affording or constraining interactions. Surprisingly, agency did not display the linear relationship with intercultural interaction outcomes that is suggested in the literature (Brown & Richards, 2012). To the contrary, the findings suggest that, provided other dimensions are present in an intercultural interaction, deep level intercultural interactions can still occur when agency is not exercised by a student. Similarly, the present research also found that the level of agency demonstrated in an interaction was not necessarily congruent with the level of intercultural transformation achieved. Simply, students who initiated an interaction did not necessarily report intercultural transformation outcomes, and students who did not initiate an interaction could report intercultural transformation outcomes, provided other dimensions were present in the relationship.

By contrast, strong congruence was found between the level of one's cultural interest (operationalised as explicit or implicit interest in cultural dimensions) and intercultural transformation outcomes. These findings resonate in part with, and provide empirical support for an emerging body of literature finding relationships between a student's 'openness to diversity' and their intercultural interaction experiences (Bowman & Denson, 2012). However, the significance of the relationship found between the level of cultural interest reported by a student and their level of intercultural transformation outcome rests in how this relationship intersects with reported levels of agency. The findings of the present research suggest that a student's failure to initiate an interaction did not necessarily represent a lack of interest in culture and diversity, but may be owing to contextual factors. Agency's role in intercultural interactions was therefore revealed as complex, and deserving of more finessed and discriminating consideration in future research.

Intergroup Dimensions

Intergroup dimensions were explored primarily in relation to identity, with a particular focus on ethnicity. The adoption of a multidimensional conceptualisation and operationalisation of identity allowed the salience of ethnic identity relative to other

identity dimensions to be empirically revealed and scrutinised. The identity map instrument that was developed (which required students to graphically deconstruct their identities both within and outside of the context of a positive intercultural interaction) proved a simple yet effective vehicle for eliciting insight into students' perceptions of their identities, and the salience they assigned them.

Curiously, the data from the identity maps suggested that the salience of ethnic identity within the context of an intercultural interaction appeared to differ little according to whether or not the interaction was experienced at a deep or shallow level. Further, the identity dimensions of personality and education consistently assumed a higher rank order salience than ethnicity. The significance of these findings lies in their implications for intercultural interaction research predicated on social identity perspective theories (Turner et al., 2007). The fundamental contention of these theories, that the strength of one's social identity (that is, their ingroup) will shape intercultural interactions through the attitudes they adopt toward, and the behaviours they engage in with persons outside their social group (the outgroup), has received strong empirical support (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008), and continues to inform intercultural interaction research. However, the findings of the present research suggest that other dimensions of social identity may be mediating and shaping how students engage in intercultural interactions, challenging the assumed, and dominant salience of ethnic social identity that informs most social identity research. These findings suggest that social identity perspective research would benefit from a more nuanced, and multidimensional operationalisation of social identity. Emerging social identity perspective literature does offer conceptual and empirical insight into how multiple identities can be accommodated and scrutinised within a social identity perspective lens, notably research informed by Rocas and Brewers' (2002) Social Complexity Theory. This body of research argues that individuals have multiple social (ingroup) identities, and demonstrates empirically a relationship between the number of, and subjective interrelationships between, one's multiple social (ingroup) identities and their intergroup attitudes (Brewer, Gonsalkorale, & van Dommelen, 2013). The focus in the current research on multiple forms of identity, and how they intersect in the context of an intercultural interaction, complements this literature.

The emergence in the findings of systematic patterns between how students understood their ethnic identity, and the depth at which they experienced their positive intercultural interactions, was also significant. Overall, students who described their ethnic identity as inherent or innate to how they saw themselves were more likely to see

beyond ethnic difference in the context of the positive intercultural interaction, and to experience positive intercultural interactions at a deep level. By contrast, students who appeared to be unaware of their ethnic identity, or expressed shallow, or removed, understandings of their ethnic identity, were more likely to report ethnic identity difference as salient within the context of a positive intercultural interaction (suggesting heightened intergroup thinking processes), and to experience positive intercultural interactions at a shallow level. While these findings demonstrate the mitigating role intergroup categorisation and comparison can play in shaping interaction outcomes, they also highlight the need for intercultural interaction research to assign ethnic identity salience a nuanced and multi-faceted scrutiny, one that incorporates meaning-making as well as perceived importance. Further, while previous studies have revealed relationships between how ethnically-diverse individuals conceptualise and experience their ethnic identity and the depth of their intercultural interactions (Syed & Azmitia, 2008), the indicators that ethnic identity development may play a role in shaping the intercultural interaction experiences of local, predominantly mono-cultural, mono-lingual students contrasts with previous research showing ethnic identity plays only a limited role in shaping intercultural interactions of majority group members (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

Contextual Dimensions

Finally, empirical insight into the mediating role of context in intercultural interactions was revealed. Importantly, context was conceptualised as involving not just the immediate and situated circumstance of the interaction, but also the “external constraints bearing on interactions and representations” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 10-11), such as explicit and implicit social and institutional structures. However, the complex, multilayered, and possibly overlapping nature of context within a social interaction was also highlighted. Indeed, even when focusing on the one ‘context’ of small group learning activities, students appeared to perceive this context as involving three discrete ‘domains’ of social activity, each playing a role in mediating intercultural interactions. In this respect, the ‘context’ of small group learning activities involved multiple, smaller and synchronous ‘sub’ contexts (or “small cultures” (Holliday, 1999)), each bringing their own set of norms, values and affordances that not only shaped how students chose to interact within them, but also appeared to privilege mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students. The work presented here contributes to an emerging body of research (Kimmel & Volet, 2010a) that highlights the value of adopting a multi-contextual conceptual lens in intercultural interaction research.

Further, interrelationships between context and individual agency were explored, demonstrating how personal intercultural dispositions (such as attitudes, efficacy and competence) were mediated by perceptions of the broader structures of small group learning environments on campus, as well as the ‘capital’ that it valued. However, in contrast with the dialectic interpretation that underpins much social science research that seeks to argue the pre-eminence of one construct over the other, a more dialogic perspective of (inter-) relationships between structure, agency and social phenomena was pursued. While strong mediating effects were found within the institution’s pedagogic, classroom and social structures, meaningful positive interactions were also found to occur if students possessed certain intercultural dispositions.

Education Implications

Overall, this research has both intercultural and educational implications. While the potential of intercultural interactions to foster intercultural transformation and heightened cultural awareness was highlighted, there was also evidence that students who entered an intercultural interaction possessing higher levels of cultural self-awareness and ethnorelativist understandings were more likely to benefit from intercultural interactions than students with less developed levels of intercultural understanding. By contrast, students with underdeveloped levels of cultural self-awareness and ethnocentric understandings appeared to be less likely to engage with interactions at deep, transformative levels, thus potentially missing out on the intercultural benefits that such an experience can bring. This suggests that the cultural frames and understandings that students bring to campus may continue to reinforce and perpetuate their existing levels of cultural understanding, and not necessarily facilitate their growth. The relationships between ethnorelativist dispositions and understandings and positive intercultural interactions have been explored for some time now (Bennett, 1993), yet recent literature is now focusing on its importance within the context of the education setting (Shaw et al., 2014; Spiro, 2014), and the need for education institutions to recognise that students enter higher education institutions with often immature, nascent levels of intercultural understanding (Bowman, 2012a; Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012; Shaw et al., 2014).

The mediating role of structural elements governing intercultural interactions on campus, and their intersection with agentic qualities, was also revealed. Structural elements were tacit, tangible elements, including pedagogy and curriculum, as well as implicit, intangible factors, such as students’ constructions and understandings of how

intercultural interactions should be performed. A manifestation of the intersection of these elements was power, with findings suggesting that mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students not only benefited from, but reinforced through their actions, their privileged position in the university classroom, thereby in effect controlling the intercultural agenda in the university classroom. It is recommended that institutions interested in facilitating intercultural interactions in the classroom should consider their curriculum and pedagogy design, including assessment practice.

The consideration of intercultural interactions generating deep, positive affect and intercultural interactions generating intercultural transformation as two separate phenomena unveiled the qualitative differences between them. Perhaps most notable was the finding that deep intercultural interactions generating positive affect did not necessarily generate intercultural transformation. Similarly, intercultural interactions that were not experienced at a deep level could generate intercultural transformation. This finding in some respects cuts to the core of intercultural education on campus, with the implication that interactions evoking positive affect might not of themselves generate the deepened and changed intercultural thinking and growth that can lead to enhanced intercultural relations between students.

From an education perspective, these findings highlight the need for higher education institutions to design programs, courses and experiences that will challenge and ‘disrupt’ (Lee, Williams, Shaw, & Jie, 2014) the cultural assumptions and understandings that students bring to the university classroom. Failure to do this could see a student’s cultural frame “perpetuate, and he or she [will be] less likely to engage across difference in meaningful ways” (Lee et al., 2014, p. 544). Conceptual frameworks and guides to the design of culturally-inclusive and generative pedagogy and curriculum abound (Jones & Killick, 2007, 2013; Leask, 2007, 2008), yet empirical studies demonstrating the effect of targeted education interventions on intercultural growth and transformation remain limited and generally small in scale (Denson, 2009; Engberg, 2004; Rosenthal & Crisp, 2006; Sakurai, McCall-Wolf, & Kashima, 2010). Given the high profile of internationalisation (Jones & de Wit, 2012; Whitsed & Green, 2014), cosmopolitanism (Rizvi, 2005b), and global competencies (Deardorff, 2006; Deardorff, 2011) within higher education discourse, it is surprising that more meaningful outcomes have not been achieved in the university classroom, and that intercultural experiences within them remain, by and large, segregated (Mak et al., 2014).

Part explanation for these phenomena may rest in how intercultural issues are presented in major education, media and government institutions. Consistently, intercultural themes are presented in these establishments as static, essentialised, reified, and ensconced in binaries (Halualani, 2011; Halualani, Mendoza, & Drzewiecka, 2009; Tupas, 2014). In order for significant shifts in intercultural interaction patterns to occur, institutions will need to engage in systemic and systematic curriculum and pedagogical redesign to effect changed frames of cultural awareness. Essentially students will need to become sensitive to, and critically aware of, culture as dynamic, fluid, complex, and inherent in all. Related, institutions need to be cognisant of how the policies and practices they implement vis-à-vis pedagogy, and broader formal and informal curriculum aspects may be constraining intercultural interactions and learning, and consider changing elements of these in order to broaden the range of academic, linguistic, social and cultural capitals that are valued on their campuses.

Another part explanation may rest simply in the very complexity of intercultural interactions. As this present study has revealed, intercultural interactions are highly complex, multidimensional and multilayered events shaped by a dynamic interplay of agentic and contextual dimensions. Therein lies the challenge. The complexity of the phenomena makes intervention design challenging, yet it is probable that intervention design that does not accommodate the complexity of factors shaping intercultural interactions will be less effective. Intercultural interventions are an area of emerging research scrutiny (Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012), with interventions implemented and reported in the literature reflecting a broad range of affective, behavioural and cognitive elements (Fischer, 2011; Jon, 2013; Syed, Juan, & Juang, 2011). However, and to date, many interventions demonstrate limited impact and scale, perhaps owing to their failure to address intercultural interactions as multilayered and multidimensional phenomena.

Further, while a dominant body of intercultural transformation research suggests intercultural transformation and growth is best achieved when students engage in international mobility programs, or a foreign sojourn, these findings contribute to a small yet growing body of literature highlighting the potential of intercultural learning and transformation to be generated by experiences situated on home campuses (Jon, 2013; Lindsey Parsons, 2010; Robson, 2011). This takes on heightened significance in the country in which this research was situated, which is presently investing in programs encouraging student take up of international exchange programs at the government, sector and institutional levels. Yet ironically, the focus (and premise) of

these programs (that one ought to go overseas to in order to engage in, and benefit from intercultural experiences) appears to reinforce at an institutional, structural level the positioning of culture as belong to the ‘other’ (in this instance, the ‘other’ country) that was observed at an individual level throughout this thesis, and that appeared to constrain intercultural interaction outcomes on campus. This is not to dismiss the transformative potential that meaningful international exchange experiences can generate (Savicki, 2008). However, current institutional and government focus on the international experience as the primary vehicle for the generation of intercultural growth and learning may overlook the potential of the university campus to afford rich intercultural experiences that can generate meaningful intercultural learning and transformation.

Of course, the implications of this research transcend the education context in which it was situated. Increasing levels of mobility around the world, leading to unprecedentedly high levels of cultural diversity within our societies, combined with ever-increasing financial, cultural, business and trade connections across nations, provide compelling societal and economic imperatives for citizens who are interculturally sensitive and competent. Just as the research in this thesis found that less-developed, ethnocentric dispositions had the potential to constrain the depth of intercultural interaction experiences on a university campus, it is likely that such attitudes are similarly shaping relationships in institutions and contexts across our communities. Simply, in workplaces, communities, education, visible difference is perhaps still implicitly, and sometimes not so implicitly, not only shaping how persons engage with others, but also constraining the potential and benefit that these relationships can afford, socially, cognitively and indeed (such as in work places) economic.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Underpinning much of this discussion (and indeed the thesis) is the implicit assumption that intercultural interactions, learning and transformation are desirable experiences that should be experienced for their potential to generate future intercultural tolerance and understanding. Indeed, such a premise pervades much intercultural interaction literature and the theories that underpin it (notably Intergroup Contact Theory (Allport, 1954)), and more broadly, the pursuit of these goals is articulated in aspirational terms in university teaching and learning plans across Australia and beyond. However, while the findings of this thesis suggest that intercultural awareness and transformation can be generated through on-campus experiences, emerging

literature adopting a longitudinal lens suggests that an ongoing, sustained relationship between a positive intercultural experience, and future intercultural tolerance cannot be assumed (Summers & Volet, 2008). In research into students' experiences of group work involving culturally-mixed student groups, Summers and Volet (2008) found that students reporting positive group work experiences did not necessarily adopt positive attitudes toward future culturally-mixed group assignments. Thus, while much research and operational foci on intercultural interactions on campus is driven by a broader goal of sustained intercultural learning and understanding, our understanding of the processes that lead to sustained, long-term change in perspective and understanding is still limited. Notwithstanding, the insight into intercultural interactions provided in this thesis will aid the pursuit of this broader research goal. Simply, a better understanding of intercultural interaction experiences as single events (as provided in this thesis) may contribute to a better understanding how they shape future intercultural attitudes and experiences. It is recommended that future research scrutinises how intercultural interactions shape future intercultural thinking attitudes over time.

It is also recommended that future research interrogate processes underpinning and shaping intercultural interactions at a broader community level. While the complex and situated nature of intercultural interactions on a university campus, and the cognitions and processes shaping them, were revealed in the research, the research design was largely predicated on understanding intercultural interactions at the level of the individual agent. Thus the research focused largely on intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of intercultural interactions, including individual-level understandings, cognitions, and perspectives. Similarly, identity and the 'outgroup', both concepts that generate meaning through comparison, and relationships with others, were also primarily explored at the level of the individual. Given that intercultural interactions are ultimately enacted at the interpersonal level, there is merit to scrutinising the "micro-ecology" (Dixon, Tredoux, Durrheim, Finchilescu, & Clack, 2008, p. 1), or the everyday processes, understandings, situatedness and experiences of intercultural interactions at the individual level, as this research has. However, is it reasonable to assume that the experiences reported in this research at the level of the individual agent will necessarily transfer to, and generate change, at a community level.

The majority of students interviewed for this research perceived and experienced intercultural interactions as positive phenomena. It is probable that these attitudes and experiences are replicated daily across universities. Yet, at an institutional, superordinate level, patterns of 'informal segregation' (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003) still

pervade university campuses (Bowman & Park, 2014; Mak et al., 2014; Moore & Hampton, 2014; Rienties & Nolan, 2014), challenging the conceptual (Allport, 1954), and empirical (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008) logic of the Contact Hypothesis - that intercultural interactions at an interpersonal level will necessarily generate improved outgroup attitudes at the intergroup level. It is the relationship between the micro-level experience of the individual at the interpersonal level, and the more macro-level manifestation of intergroup relations at a collective intergroup level that needs to be scrutinised in future research. Specifically, the processes by which individual, intergroup experiences translate into positive and improved relations across a community need to be better understood.

A limited body of conceptual literature (Dixon et al., 2005) focuses on this issue, by questioning the implied assumptions in the Contact Hypothesis literature vis-à-vis the seamlessness and direction of the relationship between the micro and macro level of intercultural interaction experiences. So far, little empirical research has specifically scrutinised the processes underlying the ‘translation’ of intercultural interaction experiences from the interpersonal to the intergroup. Dixon and colleagues raise the important empirical question,

What if the causes of collective conflict reflect processes that are relatively autonomous from—and thus impervious to—interactions between individuals?
(2007, p. 702)

Future research on intercultural interactions will benefit from scrutinising these themes.

Further, while insight into how local students constructed, understood and experienced intercultural interactions occurring on a university campus was provided, the findings must be interpreted within the context of the research design, including the focus on a single university campus. Would similar constructions and attributions be found in local student populations at other university campuses, particularly those in other countries? In light of exponential growth in global mobility in higher education (Marginson, Kaur & Sawir, 2011; Marginson et al., 2010; OECD, 2013), this question assumes great importance. Indeed, throughout the world, higher education institutions are strategically growing their international student populations, in large part driven by the pursuit of internationalisation and intercultural agenda (Clifford & Montgomery, 2014; Sawir, 2013; Spiro, 2014; Whitsed & Green, 2014), and developing programs aimed at equipping students with the intercultural skills, understandings and attitudes that our increasingly global and multicultural societies require. As all universities

generate, and are influenced by their own unique cultural, economic, political and social contexts, understanding of the phenomena raised in this research would benefit from research situated across multiple educational and cultural contexts, to determine more nuanced insight into how and in what ways context mediates intercultural interactions on campus.

Related, future research should consider ways of scaling the research to generate findings that might be able to be transferred to other contexts. The sample adopted in the present (PhD) research (n=27) facilitated the intense scrutiny of participants' self-reports needed to contribute new insights into intercultural interactions on campus. In this respect the relatively small sample size was appropriate for the research aims (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). However, future research would benefit from larger samples to generate patterns in how local students understand and experience intercultural interactions, and how strongly, and disparately, these understandings and experiences are mediated by contextual factors. Further, there is a need to triangulate data collected and analysed through means and methods other than student self-report, including ethnographic, observational studies, or quantitative survey data. While self-report provided students a means of sharing their experiences and understandings in their own words, it is only one lens through which to explore intercultural interactions – it favours the perspective of the participant. Further, self-reports were generated in an interview setting and relied on students' recollection of events, these factors possibly generating bias in account.

However, and notwithstanding these limitations, the multidimensional, multi-theoretical design of the present research gleaned unique, multilayered, multidimensional insights and perspectives into a phenomena that transcends the university campus. Indeed, intercultural interactions cut to the very core of our essence as humans, as ultimately they are phenomena constructed by us, shaped by our perceptions of our identities, and the identities of others. Why is it that people continue to construct groups as 'different' and 'other' on the grounds of culture, and why does it continue to be such a potent source of fear and persecution? And these questions take on a seemingly eternal and universal resonance, Simone de Beauvoir eloquently observing

The category of Other is as original as consciousness itself. The duality between Self and Other can be found in the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies...No group ever defines itself as One without immediately setting up the Other opposite itself (de Beauvoir, 1949).

While de Beauvoir's comments were inspired by her observation of division along gender lines, they encapsulate a deeper and broader human characteristic that continues to present whenever an aspect of 'difference' is perceived to be salient such as race, faith, and disability. But just as history has recorded, and continues to remind us of the ugly and damaging manifestations of intercultural fear and prejudice, so too does history provide a portent into how we can make intercultural interactions positive, personally meaningful and sustained events, none more powerfully than this succinct observation from Marcus Aurelius, a Roman Emperor from 161-180, "We are the other of the other" (n.d.). A powerful quote, encapsulating an awareness of difference that encompasses cultural relativism, and one's own place as an agent, and carrier, of culture. Should these not be the intercultural learning goals that govern our campuses?

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Appendix A: Empirical Paper 1

Local university students and intercultural interactions: conceptualising culture, seeing diversity and experiencing interactions.

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Local university students and intercultural interactions: conceptualising culture, seeing diversity and experiencing interactions.

Abstract: This paper examines the intercultural interaction experiences of local, first-year students (n=25) in their first few weeks at university. The focus on local students complements existing intercultural interaction literature, which has tended to concentrate on the experience of the 'cultural other' student. Employing qualitative analysis, the study revealed relationships between how students conceptualise culture, see diversity and experience their initial intercultural interactions on campus. A link between students' cultural backgrounds and the depth of their intercultural interaction experiences emerged.

Keywords: intercultural interaction, local student, first-year student, culture, diversity

Introduction

Higher Education institutions throughout the OECD are now characterised by unprecedented levels of student diversity (Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett, 2010), affording students extensive opportunities for intercultural interactions. However, research indicates that meaningful interactions between students from different cultural backgrounds are limited. Of particular concern is the paucity of intercultural interactions involving local students (Dunne, 2009; Harrison, 2012). While some research suggests that international students are engaging in intercultural interactions (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009), this typically involves other international students. By contrast, local students experiences of diversity on campus are tangential, with international and local student cohorts often studying and socialising in parallel (Kimmel & Volet, 2012). This phenomenon is common to many countries/regions including Australia (Summers & Volet, 2008), New Zealand (Ward, Masgoret, & Gezentsvey, 2009), Japan (Ujitani & Volet, 2008), Britain (Brown, 2009), Canada (Grayson, 2008), European nations (Groeppel-Klein, Germelmann, & Glaum, 2010) and North America (Levin, Sinclair, Sidanius, & Van Laar, 2009). Given the many proven learning and social benefits of intercultural interactions within educational institutions (De Vita, 2002; Jackson, 2009), together with the current focus within higher education institutions on internationalisation, the limited involvement of local students in intercultural interactions on university campuses is concerning and merits investigation.

The study reported in this paper contributes to the higher education intercultural interaction literature by seeking to identify the relationship between how local students conceptualise culture and perceive diversity at university, and their actual intercultural interaction experiences. This research takes as its lead recent research advocating a shift from the study of intercultural interactions as an entity (for instance, research exploring what conditions are needed for intercultural contact to occur) toward a more constructivist examination of “what kinds of...knowing, seeing and belonging” are necessary to produce positive intercultural interactions (Erasmus, 2010, p. 397). It is also influenced by research advocating a shift in intercultural interaction research from a focus on the “what, how and why” of intercultural interactions at universities, to a focus on how students perceive, define and interpret intercultural contact in their own words (Halualani, 2008, p. 1). It is argued that such insight will lead to a more authentic understanding of how and why intercultural interactions occur (Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2005).

Consistent with this approach, this research refrained from providing students with definitions of diversity and culture. It instead sought to glean how students defined and understood these terms, and how this understanding may have related to their actual experiences. Notwithstanding, the design of this research is predicated on a heuristic interpretation of culture (Scollon, Scollon, & Jones, 2012), in which the term was used to mean, broadly, the division of people "into groups according to some features...which helps us to understand something about them" (Scollon, et al., 2012, p. 3).

Intercultural Interactions and the Local Student

This paper's focus on the local student addresses a gap in the literature, which has tended to concentrate on international students and not acknowledge the cultural positioning and role of local students in the interaction process. Local students contribute to, and are affected by, intercultural experiences on campus: they are actively involved, not neutral observers. Further, prior research has often underestimated the cultural and attitudinal heterogeneity among the local student population by assuming congruence in local student cultural background, intercultural attitude and experience.

The limited intercultural interaction research that recognises the cultural and attitudinal diversity within the local student population elicits significant findings. Volet's (1999) early research conducted on a university campus in Australia, found Australian students from a bicultural heritage were more positive about intercultural mixing than monocultural Australians, a finding replicated in her later work (Summers

& Volet, 2008). Montgomery (2009), in a qualitative analysis of group work experiences involving local and international students, found local students with previous international experience were more open to other cultures than other local students, while Harrison (2012) found strong positive relationships between a local student's multicultural upbringing, foreign language ability and their cultural intelligence. It is important to note that these patterns are not universal, and that students without previous multicultural experiences can also positively engage in intercultural interactions (Harrison, 2012). Concomitantly, Volet's (1999) early study had revealed that local students born in Singapore and Malaysia (that is Australian permanent residents born in Singapore and Malaysia) were, as a cohort, more positive about intercultural mixing than international students (that is students studying in Australia on a student visa) born in the same countries, highlighting that positive intercultural attitudes are not simply linked to cultural background.

These examples indicate a relationship between an individual's cultural 'socialisation' and their intercultural attitudes and experiences, highlighting the need to acknowledge and explore the cultural diversity inherent within the local student population.

Intercultural Interaction and the First-Year Student

This research also takes as a focus the experience of first-year students. It explores the intercultural attitudes, motivations and dispositions first-year students bring to campus, and how these influence their initial take up of intercultural experiences. The first-year experience presents students with opportunities to establish relationships while still relatively uninfluenced by existing campus norms or practices that might influence such patterns (Koen & Durrheim, 2010).

Significant to this research are mixed findings relating to the impact of intercultural interactions on first-year students. While one body of research suggests that increasing exposure to diversity within a conducive educational environment improves the tolerance and openness of first-year students to diversity (Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001), there is also contrary evidence. For instance, Summers & Volet (2008) found that exposure to diverse others within the context of in-class group work experiences over the course of a degree does not necessarily result in an improved attitude toward culturally-mixed group work in later years and that attitudes and behaviours relating to intercultural interactions were firmly established within the student's first year of study. Similarly, Koen and Durrheims' (2010) study of informal segregation patterns on a South African university campus found that seating

patterns in first-year classrooms were more segregated at the end of the study period than at the beginning. Given the importance of the first year to later intercultural outcomes, understanding first-year students' conceptualisations and experiences of culture, diversity and intercultural interactions is critical.

Research Questions

This research sought to understand the relationships between first-year, local students' conceptualisations of culture, perceptions of diversity, and intercultural interactions on an Australian University campus. It also endeavoured to explore the role a student's cultural background had in shaping those outcomes. Two research questions were generated:

RQ1. What are the relationships between how first-year local students conceptualise culture, perceive diversity and experience intercultural interactions?

RQ2. What is the role of cultural background in shaping first-year local students' conceptualisations of culture, perceptions of diversity and intercultural interaction experiences?

Methodology

In order to gain insight into how students interpret and perceive culture, diversity and intercultural interactions in the context of their actual lived experience on campus, a qualitative methodology approach grounded within a constructivist epistemology was adopted. This approach recognises that conceptualisations of culture, perceptions of diversity and intercultural interaction experiences are phenomena constructed by individuals, and are shaped by the interaction of the individual with their broader social environment and previous experiences. As such, the researchers did not prescribe to the participants a definition or understanding of what an intercultural interaction was: rather, the research was interested in identifying how students understood and experienced these phenomena.

Research Site

The research was conducted on the primary campus of a medium-sized (2010 total enrolments $n=14481$), metropolitan university in Australia. The institution is noted for its outreach to low-socioeconomic status students: students from this demographic comprise 16% of the local student population. Further, within the local, first-year cohort, 40% of students are aged below 21, and 26% are 31 or over.

The campus is ethnically diverse. International students studying on a student visa comprise 14% of the student population, with top source countries including USA, Germany, Singapore and Malaysia. Within the local student population, 27% were born

overseas and 10% speak a language other than English at home. 59.7% of students are female, 49% are fulltime students and 19% are enrolled externally. At the time of the research, the institution had included 'global perspective' as one of its graduate attributes, although it had no related policy outlining how this should be achieved.

Participants

Participants were 25 first-year local students enrolled in business, engineering and communication units. Thirteen identified as possessing a bicultural background, highlighting the internal cultural diversity of the local student population. Participants were recruited in class in the first weeks of the academic year and broadly reflected the University's overall demographic (age and gender) profile. All participants were volunteers and received a \$25 book voucher in appreciation of their time.

This study forms part of a larger research project into intercultural interactions in professional schools at universities, and the choice of professional schools was driven by a growing awareness of the benefits of a culturally-plural workforce (Cope & Kalantzis, 1997). The 25 participants were the full sample of students recruited for the larger research project who met the criteria for this study. The benefits of a small sample size for in-depth, qualitative analysis of complex, social phenomenon are highlighted in the literature on qualitative research methodologies (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

Procedure

Semi-structured individual interviews (40-50 minutes) were held in the first six weeks of the academic year. They were conducted in a conversational style, and an attempt was made to keep them relaxed and informal and to tailor the flow of the interview to fit student leads (Oakley, 1981). Questions were designed to elicit information relating to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, information about peer groups and social patterns, attitudes toward diversity and actual interaction experiences on campus. Questions exploring intercultural interactions invited students to reflect on positive experiences involving persons from a cultural background different from their own, and to recount processes and factors that enabled those experiences. Students were also encouraged to recount how they felt during the interaction, and what made the interaction positive. Probes were used to elicit further detail and depth in responses, with feedback and encouragement given throughout the interview to reinforce to the student the value of their contribution to the study (Patton, 2002). Anecdotal feedback after the interviews indicated that students found the

experience valuable, as it allowed them to reflect on issues that many had not consciously considered before.

Interview Data Analysis

All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim and then analysed. Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis approach was adopted. This entails analysing data at both a textual and interpretive level, and provides for inductive and deductive approaches. This methodology resonated with the aims of this research. First, the application of inductive analysis enabled students' spontaneous ideas related to intercultural interactions to emerge from the data, minimising the impact of theoretical and empirical preconceptions (Thomas, 2006). Second, it provided the researchers the opportunity to derive meaning from students' accounts and reflections, as well as situating and interpreting the data within the students' cultural, academic and social contexts. This was critical to reveal how students make sense of their experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The analytic process involved three steps, each involving a further layer of analysis and development of the data. The first step of the analysis involved identifying concrete experiences, observations and attitudes as well as ideas and concepts relating to cultural diversity that emerged within students' accounts. The initial reading therefore involved an inductive approach where ideas were noted against a descriptor. The second step involved grouping these ideas into themes. The analysis was guided by Braun and Clark's (2006) conceptualisation of a theme as involving patterned responses and meanings. One example involved grouping all references to food, dress and other cultural symbols into a theme called surface culture. This process involved examining the strength of the relationship between the ideas grouped within each theme, following Patton's (2002) guidelines regarding internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. Essentially, these guidelines posit that material within a theme should converge, and that themes should remain distinct from one another. This process resulted in the development of a thematic table that was applied deductively to analyse the entire data set (n=25). Throughout the process, care was taken to ensure that patterns and issues not consistent with the dominant themes were identified and noted (Patton, 2002; Willis, 2010).

Finally, the third step involved mapping the themes to the generic constructs that were investigated in this study, namely, how students conceptualise culture, perceive diversity, and experience intercultural interactions.

Transcription

All forms of transcription are, at some level, compromised representations of actual interaction and expression (Ashmore & Reed, 2000; Smith, Hollway, & Mishler, 2005). However it was important to capture basic interactional details of the interviews. Therefore, transcriptions of the interviews recorded speech patterns such as pauses, interruptions in speech, laughter and incomplete sentences. Speech inflection, pace and volume were not transcribed. Laughter and pauses were recorded in square parentheses. Speech removed from quotes is indicated by blank square parentheses. Participants were each assigned a number identifier (for instance P2 for participant 2) and not a pseudonym.

Findings

Research Question 1: What are the relationships between how first-year local students conceptualise culture, perceive diversity and experience intercultural interactions?

Conceptualisations of culture. Students' descriptions of culture reflected a continuum ranging from essentialist, reified and ethnocentric interpretations, through to understandings that were dynamic and ethnorelative, in which culture was seen as intrinsic to being.

In the essentialist interpretation, reference to culture typically focused on symbolic and surface elements such as food, cultural symbols and social structures. Cultural knowledge was viewed as static and fixed, with set rules and practices that needed to be learned.

With people that I've met who are Muslim it is known that the father is the head of the household. The mother is not and she cooks. (P2)

If I want to deal with Asia, it is really important to actually know the culture over there, to deal with these guys. (P8)

By assigning culture concrete properties, these students situated it as an entity removed from themselves and their experiences. Implicit to this conceptualisation was positioning the speaker as being without culture: culture belonged to the 'diverse' other.

I've always felt a little ripped off because, you know, like Jewish people just seem to have this incredibly rich vein of humour that they can tap and it's like, I'm just boring and white and you know. (P14)

Ethnocentric dispositions were also evident throughout their responses. Students frequently tried to understand the 'other' through comparison to their own cultural frame of reference.

I think when in Australian culture, that's sort of not, not on. Like we don't really do that. Like, we're quite respectful in our culture I think. (P27 discussing the behaviour of one student in class)

By contrast, other students saw culture as dynamic, something that is intrinsic to being.

I really found my culture on my journey through life. Just the communities I lived in, the people I associated with, and that's where I found my culture. (P7)

This conceptualisation revealed a deeper layer of cultural experience and awareness. Values and behaviours were noted. Culture was not depicted as something outside of the speaker's domain, rather students recognised the universality of cultural positioning, including their own.

I guess it [culture] doesn't affect so much who I hang out with it just ... affects what I know about who I hang out with ... the different sort of things that I understand about them. (P13)

Um, I like to accept all the cultures I've got in me and even the ones I haven't, I still like to accept and embrace them. (P24)

These students focused on cultural awareness, learning to read other cultures, and displaying a positive attitude towards doing so.

It's not just learning, learning about someone else ... it's the fact that you're curious about it and the importance of it. (P7)

Ethnorelative dispositions were also more prevalent within this group.

It [diversity] also broadens our knowledge and helps it evolve. (P24)

Like not only, um, should they be immersed in our Australian culture but I think that we need to learn a little bit about theirs to be able to understand where they're coming from ... we should have to learn something about them as well. (P13)

These students appeared prepared to understand their culture within the context of equal others.

On ‘seeing’ diversity. As with responses regarding their conceptualisations of culture, students’ perceptions of diversity on campus were also varied. Most students saw the campus as ethnically diverse,

The widest ethnic diversity I’ve seen. (P9)

and agreed that diversity on campus was a good thing.

I think it’s always good to have that mixture of cultures because people seem to learn more about people and how their views on the world are different to ours.

(P2)

However, there was significant variance vis-à-vis how students saw this diversity in relation to intergroup interactions. Some students saw social groups on campus as ethnically homogeneous and segregated, this generally identified as a feature of ‘visibly different’ groups and not ‘mainstream’ Australians. The reference to ‘sticking together’ was common in this discourse.

People who are maybe from the same countries kind of stick together. (P5)

Interestingly, one student interpreted their observations of diversity through a homogeneous lens, even when confronted with heterogeneity.

Either it’s Australians altogether or umm Japanese together or Indian people altogether. If not then...you’ll probably have like an Indian group with one token Australian or an Australian group with one token Asian person...that’s what I see. (P10)

This student saw heterogeneous groups as tokenistic, maintaining a perception that ethnic groups ‘stick’ to themselves.

These students described patterns of mixing in terms of intergroup boundaries: cultural groups were considered distinct collectives and identified as ‘they’, spatially and culturally removed from ‘us’ or ‘we’.

I don’t want to slip up. I don’t know if I want to, like, do something that *they’re* going to find disrespectful. (P27 emphasis added)

By contrast, an equal number of students observed heterogeneous groups of students on campus.

Over here it’s very diverse, like I’ll see different nationalities talking together, sitting together, so yeah. (P6)

While some of these students also saw ethnically homogeneous groups, integrated, heterogeneous groups were considered the dominant pattern.

You see mixed crowds with, like, from each country, from each part of the world sitting together. (P7)

These students did not see the campus as being composed of fixed, exclusive groupings based on race or culture: rather they described a campus in which there was extensive intercultural mixing. They appeared to mediate the 'barrier' effect of ethnic groups through different forms of categorisation. Some saw groups in terms of superordinate identity categories in which a common student or interest group identity was salient (Gaertner, 2000).

We all sat down and discussed ... how the tutor group would help benefit us all ... we all accepted everything each other had to say, and that was when we all felt like we belonged as a group, together. (P24, describing the first meeting of a study group involving students from multiple cultural backgrounds)

Others 'saw beyond the groups' by decategorising (Gaertner, 2000) their own and others' cultures as unique and subjective.

My culture is individual to me, not to a whole ... I always think of people as individuals. (P7)

This group described the diversity that they saw in terms that suggested an integrated, permeable pattern of intercultural mixing.

Experiences of positive intercultural interactions. As the data was collected in the first month of the students' first year of university study, it was expected that interactions experienced by the students would be limited. However, the data revealed the emergence of diverging interaction experiences ranging from those that could be described as fragmented and shallow, to other experiences that, although still limited, displayed qualities suggesting the emergence of a deeper and longer lasting relationship.

Some students had no intercultural interaction experiences to share, declaring they had met no one from a different culture on campus, while others recalled interactions that involved little more than a superficial greeting.

I: Have you made friends on campus with people from other countries?

P: [Pause 4 seconds] No. I can't say I have. (P9)

I: Have you had any preliminary interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds to your own?

P: Yes, but sort of through, a little bit being forced like, if you happen to sit next to someone from a little bit of a different cultural background. (P20)

While some of these interactions were reported as ongoing, they appeared fragmented and lacking evidence to suggest that they might develop into more sustained relationships.

I: And the [interactions] that you had with people from different backgrounds, would you say they have been overall positive or negative, or ...?

P: Yes, they have been nice people.

I: And what made them positive?

P: Just general politeness. Yes.

I: But you haven't yet had any further interactions with [interrupted]?

P: Probably not. (P20)

With many of these shallow interactions, it was unclear whether or not the students genuinely considered them to be positive, or whether they were deeming them positive due to a 'social desirability effect' (Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954) in the context of the interview. However, interview data revealed that relationships with people from culturally different backgrounds did differ in depth compared to those with non-diverse peers.

By contrast, a significant number of students reported the emergence of more meaningful interaction experiences. While the interaction experiences were still in their formative stages, there were indications that they could develop into deeper relationships. Some interactions already appeared sustained over the first few weeks of semester.

The first week I was just, I just sat down ... and, this umm group of Asian girls and there was a few Asian guys ... they sat down and then the second week, we were forced to introduce ourselves and what not ... Sort of just working together, umm but then by the third week we were all just making jokes and like, ohh have you got Facebook? (P29)

There were also indications of the intercultural interaction experiences affecting the students, causing them to examine their own thoughts and beliefs.

These guys were presenting points, my own points of view to me in a way I'd never thought about it. (P17)

These students saw an intercultural element in all their experiences. Culture did not appear to be seen as something removed, but rather embedded in who they were, and what they did.

P: I'm engaging with diversity all the time. (P26)

Interestingly, while most students acknowledged the potential for intercultural learning through exposure to diverse others, many did not display the motivation to initiate intercultural interactions.

I wouldn't go out of my way to talk to anyone unless it was needed like ... "Do you know how to go here?" ... that's the only way I'd interact with people from a different culture. (P10)

Nevertheless, counter positions were found in the data with other students displaying motivation to engage with cultural 'others'.

I feel I've got kind of a limited mind ... but now I want to get out and meet lots of different people, see how they view the world. (P4)

Relationships between conceptions of culture, perceptions of diversity and intercultural interaction. When reviewing the responses related to conceptualisations of culture, perceptions of diversity and actual intercultural interaction experiences, a systematic pattern of relationships between the three constructs studied emerged. These patterns are captured in Figure 1.

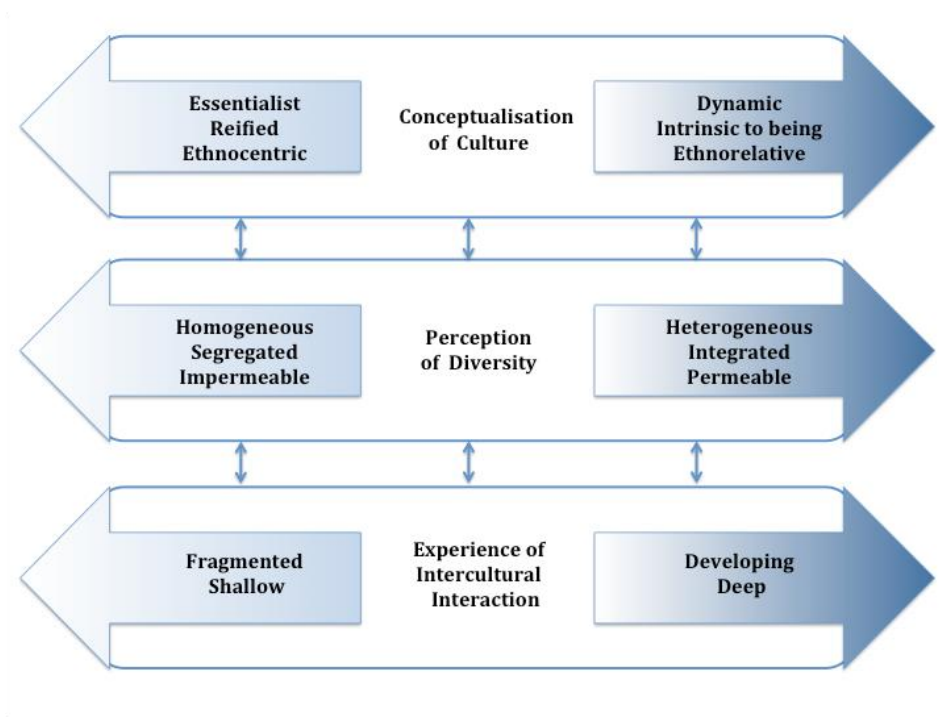


Figure 1. Relationships between conceptualisation of culture, perception of diversity and intercultural experience.

This figure is divided into three rows, each representing one of the three constructs studied (that is, conceptualisation of culture, perception of diversity and intercultural interaction experience). Within each row is a vertical arrow reflecting a

continuum of understanding within that dimension, with deeper, more complex conceptualisations and experiences reflected to the right side of the continuum and shallower, more limited understandings and experiences positioned to the left. Finally, the table has three connector arrows positioned between each of the constructs – one at the higher end of the continuum, one in the middle and one at the lower end. This is significant, since it represents the congruence among the constructs at different positions across the continuum. Reading down the right-hand sides of the continuums shows that students with dynamic, ethnorelative conceptualisations of culture tended to perceive the diversity on campus to be heterogeneous and integrated and reported intercultural interaction experiences that suggested emergent relationships.

Conversely, reading down the left-hand side of the continuums shows that students who understood culture as essential and reified generally saw diversity on campus as homogeneous and segregated and their intercultural experiences were fragmented and shallow. The continuum is a useful heuristic for this study, reflecting that data was not simply located at the extremes of the three continuums within Figure 1, but was found at various points within these.

Only two students' responses diverged from the pattern captured in Figure 1. The first student displayed an ethnorelative conceptualisation of culture, saw diversity on campus as heterogeneous and integrated, yet his intercultural experience appeared fragmented and shallow. The second student revealed an ethnorelative understanding of culture and saw homogeneous and segregated groupings on campus. Nevertheless, his accounts of intercultural experiences on campus suggested an emerging deep relationship. All other students displayed convergence in their conceptualisation of culture, perception of diversity and intercultural experiences.

Research Question 2: What is the role of cultural background in shaping first-year local students' conceptualisations of culture, perceptions of diversity and intercultural interaction experiences?

Empirical studies exploring the relationship between a student's bicultural background and intercultural engagement with intercultural interaction indicate that a bicultural background makes individuals more open to complex understandings of culture and more oriented to engage with cultural difference (De Korne, Byram, & Fleming, 2007; Lee, 2010; Volet, 1999). The data was analysed on the basis of this identification to establish the extent to which a bicultural background influenced students' conceptualisations of culture, perceptions of diversity and intercultural interaction experiences.

Participants were categorised into three groups: a group identifying as Australian monocultural (this group comprised students who identified as Australian only and did not cite any bicultural background); a group identifying as bicultural involving another Western culture (this group included students from Australian-South African [white], Australian-German and Australian-UK backgrounds); and a group also identifying as bicultural but involving a non-Western culture (this group included students from Australian-Vietnamese, Australian-Chinese and Australian-Indian backgrounds). No Australian-Aboriginal students participated in the research. While these categories appear to parallel racial divides, race was not salient in students' reflections nor in this research, which focused on students' cultural backgrounds, and how these might impact intercultural experiences.

Table 1 reports the extent to which levels of intercultural interactions were related to students' cultural backgrounds.

		Level of intercultural experience			
		Shallow	Middle	Deep	Total
Row 1	Monocultural	5	1	6	12
Row 2	Bicultural	5	2	6	13
Row 3	Bicultural Western	3	1	1	5
Row 4	Bicultural Non-Western	2	1	5	8
Row 5	All students	10	3	12	25

Table 1. Depth of levels of intercultural experiences on campus by sub-groups of students ($n=25$).

Only depth of intercultural experience is presented in the table but, as discussed, a relationship can be assumed between depth of intercultural experience, conceptualisation of culture and perception of diversity. Rows 1, 2 and 5 of Table 1 reveal an even distribution of shallow/middle and deep intercultural experiences overall, as well as across mono- and bi-cultural groups. However, when the bicultural population is divided into Western or non-Western backgrounds (Rows 3 and 4), interesting patterns emerge. As shown Row 3, the majority of students from Western

bicultural backgrounds reported shallow conceptualisations of culture and intercultural experiences, whereas a majority of students from non-Western bicultural backgrounds (Row 4) reported deeper conceptualisations, perceptions and experiences.

While the sample is small, these findings suggest that the cultural distance within a student's bicultural background may also be related to levels of intercultural engagement. The significance of cultural distance on interactions has been examined elsewhere in the literature (e.g. Harrison & Peacock, 2010).

Discussion

This study had two research questions. The first was to explore the relationships between conceptualisation of culture, perception of diversity and intercultural interactions among first-year, local students. A consistent relationship was found between these three constructs: students with an ethnorelative conceptualisation of culture saw diversity as heterogeneous and permeable and enjoyed intercultural interactions that suggested an emerging relationship. Conversely, students with an ethnocentric conceptualisation of culture saw diversity as homogeneous and impermeable and engaged in intercultural interactions that seemed to be fragmented and shallow. While this research was not designed to explore the causality of these relationships, the data suggests that how individuals conceptualise culture and perceive diversity can impact positively or negatively on their actual experiences. In this sense, culture and diversity are not objective phenomena universally experienced: rather, how one sees and understands culture is related to how one experiences it. While the link between ethnocentric and ethnorelative conceptualisations of culture and actual intercultural interaction experience has been explored elsewhere (Michael Paige, Jacobs-Cassuto, Yershova, & DeJaeghere, 2003), there is limited empirical evidence or theory linking these constructs to student perceptions of diversity, particularly group permeability.

Most students identified groupings of students on campus, but not all saw these as exclusively ethnically homogeneous. However, students who did see groupings as ethnically homogeneous tended to see them as impermeable, suggesting heightened intergroup thinking and social categorisation processes (Tajfel, 1982). Further, this research suggests that these psychological processes are related to how one constructs and construes their social reality. In this respect, the groups identified by students are not social entities but function as 'perspectives on the world' through which student experiences are shaped (Brubaker, Loveman, & Stamatov, 2004, p. 31).

The second research aim was to explore how a student's cultural background might shape the relationships between conceptualisation of culture, perception of diversity and intercultural interaction. This research found that intercultural interaction experiences varied according to a student's bicultural background. The greater incidence of deep intercultural experiences reported in this research by bicultural-non-Western students resonates with other findings linking students' intercultural interaction attitudes and experiences to previous cultural exposure (Harrison, 2012; Volet, 1999; Summers & Volet, 2008), as well as Bennett's DMIS theory that notes individuals exposed to bi- or multi-cultural socialisation have access to enhanced resources and perspectives that can influence the complexity of their construal and experiences of intercultural events (1993).

However, the findings from the bicultural-Western students, although emergent and limited, were more puzzling. Not only did they report shallower experiences than bicultural non-Western students, they also reported shallower experiences than monocultural Australians. This was not expected. All of the bicultural-Western students identified and discussed their mixed cultural heritage during the interviews: most of them were born in another country, and all had lived in another country for extended periods. However, while they were aware of their bicultural positioning, their exposure to bi- or multi-cultural socialisation did not lead to the deeper levels of intercultural thinking and experience found in the bicultural non-Western group. Reasons for this are not clear, although it may be owing to the 'bi'-cultural experience for these students being so culturally similar to that of mainstream Australia that it did not produce the expected effect. This finding deserves further research.

The findings reported in this article contribute to the higher education intercultural interaction literature that has, through its focus on the international student experience, implicitly assumed homogeneity in cultural background, attitude and experience within the local student population (Brown, 2009; Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008). Not only was there variation across the sample in the depth of reported conceptualisations and experiences, but also differences related to experiences emerged when cultural distance was considered. Theoretical explanation for this latter phenomenon may be found in Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) that posits that intercultural sensitivity and awareness is a developmental process. Core to this theory is the concept of worldview - an intercultural outlook developed by persons through their reflection on intercultural phenomena and events. Bennett argues that exposure to diversity is, of itself, not enough to develop

intercultural perspectives. Rather, he posits that the level of complexity with which one construes the intercultural event is likely to determine how deeply it is experienced. The data gathered in this study supports this, through evidence of a relationship between understanding of culture and actual intercultural experience. This study also extends Bennett's theory by incorporating the dimension of perception of diversity and the link to cultural background.

Conclusion

This article's focus on local students is timely. Much of the discourse on intercultural interactions on university campuses, and consequently many current intercultural interventions, target international students on the assumption that they are the 'carriers' of culture and need support to 'engage' with the host culture: the role of the local student in intercultural interactions is frequently overlooked. This research has shown that all university students are actors in intercultural interactions on campuses and demonstrates that local students, like international students, come to university with cultural backgrounds and perspectives that will affect their ability to engage with diversity.

These findings have implications for the design of curriculum, pedagogy and social support strategies aimed at enhancing intercultural interactions on campus. Not only should intercultural interaction strategies be designed to support all students, they need to be underpinned by the recognition that culture is inherent in all students. Education praxis that situates culture as removed and reified will only continue to reinforce many of the conceptualisations that may be hindering more meaningful interactions from occurring on university campuses. The authors note the present research relied on students' accounts of their experiences: observational data would be useful to include in future research in order to establish how students' perceptions converge with practices.

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Appendix B: Empirical Paper 2

Intercultural interactions of mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students in small group learning activities: a Bourdieusian analysis.

Cassandra Colvin, Farida Fozdar & Simone Volet

Colvin, C., Fozdar, F., & Volet, S. (2015). Intercultural interactions of mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students in small group learning activities: a Bourdieusian analysis. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 36(3), 414-433.

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Intercultural interactions of mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students in small group learning activities: a Bourdieusian analysis.

Abstract: This research examines the understandings and experiences of mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students in relation to intercultural interactions within small group learning activities at university. Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and capital are employed to illuminate a number of barriers to intercultural interaction. Using qualitative analysis of interviews with local students, the study revealed intercultural interactions to be co-shaped by multiple co-existing, interdependent and often competing structural and contextual elements, as well as the personal dispositions students bring to the classroom. The field tends to privilege the capital held by local students (knowledge of small group work, verbal confidence, language), and imposes structural limits on interactions. While students' habitus mediates this effect, the overall result discourages interactions between local students and those from different cultural backgrounds. Implications for universities are discussed.

Keywords: intercultural interaction, local student, university, Bourdieu.

Introduction

While universities in most English-speaking nations are now sites of considerable cultural diversity, evidence suggests that local student take-up of opportunities to engage with students from culturally different backgrounds is limited (Dunne, 2009; Harrison & Peacock, 2010). Many local students appear to work in ethnically homogeneous groups, which can, in extreme cases, result in culturally-segregated classroom environments (Singaram et al., 2011). Further, research suggests that it is the cohort of students with the least international exposure and experience in their personal lives (that is mono-lingual students from mono-cultural backgrounds) that is most likely to live out culturally-segregated experiences on campus (Strauss, U , & Young, 2011; Summers & Volet, 2008). The limited take-up of intercultural interaction opportunities on campus suggests that the benefits of such interactions, such as enhanced learning, creativity, problem-solving and intercultural development (Leung & Chiu, 2010), are not being fully realised.

This paper reports the findings of an empirical study of mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students' accounts of their classroom intercultural experiences. Bourdieu's social field theory provides a conceptual lens through which to interpret the findings.

Intercultural Interactions within Small Group Learning Activities

This paper is inspired by recent literature advocating the benefits of analyses of intercultural interactions that consider how they are framed by contextual elements (Brisset et al., 2010). In this research, context is conceptualised as involving not just a students' "immediate, lived experience" (Mills & Gale, 2011, p. 241) but also the "external constraints bearing on interactions and representations" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 10-11), such as social and institutional structures.

Specifically, this study conceptualised context as small group learning activities employed within the university classroom, which presume both collaborative learning and group assessment practices. Both the pedagogical and socio-cultural dimensions of this context are important for two reasons. First, much university learning is premised on social constructivist learning principles that assume students are engaging in productive and meaningful interactions with others (Dawson, 2010). Second, the relationship between students' social connections (such as peer relations and sense of inclusion and belonging), student well-being and ultimately their learning outcomes is also well documented (Meeuwisse, Severiens, & Born, 2010). The social dimension of a student's university experience is therefore embedded within the learning activities context, with the social experience impacting the learning experience and vice-versa.

There is also an extensive body of conceptual literature that argues the potential of structured, interactive activities for learning about how to work with, and learn from, diverse others (Budde-Sung, 2011; Leask, 2009). However, empirical evidence supporting a positive relationship between pedagogical practices and intercultural interaction experiences is limited. Some research has demonstrated beneficial outcomes from pedagogical and curriculum interventions within universities (Deakins, 2009; Mak & Barker, 2004), although this research typically involves small-scale, localised interventions. By contrast, research investigating actual lived experiences of small group learning activities highlights that exposure to, and interaction with, diverse working groups does not necessarily result in improved attitudes toward working and engaging with people from diverse backgrounds (Strauss et al., 2011; Summers & Volet, 2008). Given recent university and government emphasis on the benefits of globalisation and internationalisation for universities (Jones, 2010), these findings are concerning.

Finally, of particular relevance is emerging literature that suggests a relationship between mono-lingualism and a reduced propensity to engage with students from culturally different backgrounds (Strauss et al., 2011; Summers & Volet, 2008). There is also evidence that persons from mono-cultural backgrounds are less inclined to engage with cultural difference than their bicultural peers (Lee, 2010; Volet, 1999). The implications of these findings are that mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students would not only benefit from intercultural interactions, they may also be among the most reticent students to pursue them. However, very little research examines the intercultural interaction experiences of students who are both mono-cultural and mono-lingual. This study seeks to redress this gap.

In light of the above, this study sought to gain insight into how mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students understood and perceived intercultural interactions within small group learning activities at university. To what extent did the learning environment afford or constrain interactions, and what agency did students exercise to shape these outcomes? Rather than focusing on what Halualani (2008) refers to as the “what” and “why” of intercultural interactions, this research seeks to explore student constructions of intercultural interactions, arguing that these perceptions play a key role in framing actual experience. As Halualani asserts, in order to fully understand how students experience intercultural interactions it is first necessary to determine how students “define and make sense” of these phenomena (2008, p. 1).

Bourdieu’s concepts are used to explore student perceptions of the personal and contextual influences shaping these phenomena.

Bourdieu’s Social Field Theory

Bourdieu’s social field theory provides an analytic framework that understands social phenomena in terms of three interconnected concepts: field, habitus and capital. Bourdieu conceptualises social activity as practice that occurs between actors in social spaces called fields. According to Bourdieu, fields are autonomous spaces that have rules and roles that inform social behaviour and distinguish them from other fields: in Bourdieu’s words, they have their own ‘logic’ (Bourdieu, 1992). In order to succeed within a field, an agent needs to understand the rules that govern social behaviour within it.

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 98) extend the analogy of a field to that of a game: “we can, with caution, compare a field to a game ... it follows rules or regularities that are not explicit or codified”. However, the “game” of the field is not experienced equally by all agents within it. Rather, a field assumes inequality between

agents due to the different positions held by them, this determined by the resources (capital) and dispositions (habitus) they have access to, and how these ‘fit’ the rules of the game (field). Bourdieu also argues that fields are contested spaces, in which agents seek to either improve or retain their position through strategies known as position-taking.

While field is the structure and environment in which social activity occurs, habitus refers to the internalised dispositions held by agents that influence their decisions and actions. In the metaphor of the game, habitus shapes decisions that an individual makes while playing the game. It is essentially “the mental structures through which they [individuals] apprehend the social world” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 18). Habitus provides a framework that embraces subjective and objective realities: by influencing how one perceives surrounding structures, the habitus influences how one chooses to engage with a particular social situation.

A third concept in social field theory is capital. Capital refers to the tools, skills, knowledge and resources available to the individual to help them engage in the interaction. The ‘game’ of the field is played with capital: “kinds of capital, like trumps in a game of cards, are powers which define the chances of profit in a given field” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 230). Capital comes in many forms, social, cultural, economic and symbolic, and its implicit quality is value or worth, as determined by the field. If an agent has access to capital that is valued in a field, they will typically succeed in the field, and assume a higher position within it. Bourdieu’s insight was that while everyone holds capital, certain fields privilege particular capital, providing advantages for some sections of the community, and disadvantages for others.

In summary, Bourdieu’s theory recognises that social phenomena occur in, and are shaped by, the field, and that the participation of agents is shaped by their habitus, access to capital, and the value afforded to each by the ‘rules’ of the field. Further, Bourdieu considers habitus, field and capital to be dynamic, shaping and being shaped by each other. While field may shape habitus and capital, habitus and capital can also transform the field.

Applying social field theory to intercultural interactions on campus.

For this study, the field was operationalised as small group learning activities. Key practices occurring within this field include class discussions, group work activities and group assessments. This operationalisation was inspired by Bourdieu’s application of field to multiple arenas of social practice, ranging from broad, such as the intellectual field, literary field, and the field of cultural production, to specific, such as the tennis

field and the university field. Each of Bourdieu's fields involves multiple and disparate actors and institutions bound by common practice and logic.

Consistent with Bourdieu's theory, the field of small group learning activities is seen as an unequal playing field, with students holding different positions within it, owing to the type and amount of capital that they possess. However, while Bourdieu's writings focus on socio-economic class as a primary form of group 'distinction', this paper distinguishes students (as agents) on the basis of cultural background.

Research Aims and Questions

Two specific research questions were generated.

RQ1. How does the field of small group learning activities, and the capital valued within it, structure students' intercultural interactions?

RQ2. How does the habitus that students bring to the field mediate intercultural interactions?

Methodology

In order to establish how the field of small group learning activities influenced intercultural interactions, the logic and valued capital of the field, the positions of actors, and their relations within the field needed to be determined. The research was therefore guided by Maton's (2005) case for a methodology that would allow for the emergence of "the principal contours of the field as collectively seen by participants at the time, rather than viewed from without or in hindsight" (2005, p. 610). In essence, this is a methodology that reveals how the actors involved in a field actually understand and experience it. Owing to the key role that actors play in co-shaping or transforming a field, a methodology that focuses on the perspective of the actors involved is justified. This research is therefore grounded in a phenomenological epistemology, where students' perceptions of the phenomenon being studied are the focus (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). In addition to securing a more 'authentic' interpretation of field, this methodology also acknowledges that student views vis-à-vis small group learning activities in effect constitute their reality, and have a role in shaping the field (Maton, 2005).

Research Site

The research was conducted at a medium-sized ($n \approx 15,000$) metropolitan university in Australia. At the time of the research, 86% of the total student population was local, that is, they were citizens or permanent residents of Australia. Of this population, 73% were born in Australia and 90% spoke only English. International students studying on a student visa comprised 14% of the on-campus student population

and were fairly evenly distributed throughout the university courses. At the time of the research, ‘global perspective’ was one of the institution’s desired graduate attributes, however there was no related policy outlining how this should be achieved.

Participants

Analysis focuses on interview transcripts from ten White, mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students in their first-year of study at the university. The term mono-cultural denotes students who identified as Australian, and did not reveal any other ethnic heritage in themselves or their parents. Students who spoke a language other than English were not included. Participants represented the complete group of students that met these characteristics from within a much larger and more diverse research sample. Students were recruited in the first week of the academic year from major first-year units across a number of disciplines, including business, media and engineering. Students volunteered for the study and received no credit or payment for participating. They were, however, presented with a small book voucher (value AUS\$15) as a token of appreciation.

The benefit of a small sample size for in-depth, qualitative analysis of complex, social phenomena is established (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Qualitative analysis seeks to understand interactions and dimensions within a phenomenon, rather than quantify them; and to establish “what things ‘exist’ [rather] than determining how many such things there are” (Walker, 1985, p. 489). The sample of ten participants is appropriate for such analysis.

Procedure

Research participants were involved in two semi-structured interviews: one in the first few weeks of the academic year, the second at the commencement of their second semester of study. Interviews lasted 40-50 minutes, were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The interviews were structured around a series of open-ended questions that addressed broad, pre-determined themes relating to the research objectives. These included reflections on intercultural interactions within and outside of the classroom, to determine the extent to which interactions varied across formal and informal contexts. Probes were used to elicit further detail and depth, with feedback and encouragement given throughout the interview to reinforce to the student the value of their contribution to the study (Patton, 2002). The use of semi-structured interviews provided flexibility, allowing for emergent themes arising to be explored where appropriate (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Further, open-ended questioning invited a deeper level of response

and reflection than might have been achieved through more structured questioning methods.

Analysis

Before analysis could commence, the researchers were required to capture all data pertaining to the research questions. This process involved excluding interview material not considered relevant to the current research questions. The captured data was then analysed using a three-step process.

In the first step, the data was coded into themes, i.e. patterned responses and meanings (Braun & Clark, 2006). These included observations about the demographic profile of the class, seating patterns, group work practices, attitudes towards diversity, and accounts of intercultural interaction experiences.

The second step involved assigning themes to Bourdieu's primary concepts, field, capital and habitus. Material coded to field included, for example, statements about social structural aspects, such as "I rarely come into contact with people from other places in Murdoch ... it just seems to be the way it is"; material coded as habitus included personal orientations such as "I don't see skin colour"; and capital identified statements about social, material or intellectual aspects seen as beneficial in the field, such as "I've got friends that I've been friends with all throughout highschool here". Sometimes themes aligned to a single concept, for instance, the theme 'intercultural confidence' was assigned to habitus as it is clearly an internalised disposition. However, where appropriate, elements of themes could be assigned to several concepts.

A third step was required to answer research question 1. This involved analysing the data identified as specifically relevant to 'field'. This process revealed three spaces within the field, distinguished by particular characteristics. As these were bound by, and contributed to, the logic of the field, they were not considered to be discrete fields or sub-fields *per se*, and are instead referred to as 'domains'. It is argued that these domains provide a useful lens through which to view different aspects of the field.

Findings

Field, Capital and the Structuring of Intercultural Interactions

The three domains within the field, the pedagogical, physical and social domains, each had their own logics and valued different types of capital. Each is discussed below.

Pedagogical domain. The pedagogical domain refers to the learning processes within the field, as perceived by students. Two themes emerged within this domain as having a particular influence on intercultural interactions: the perceived importance of

active verbal participation in small group learning activities, and the related need for English language proficiency.

Active verbal participation. Students saw the ability to verbally present one's arguments or opinions to others as vital, with many students believing that confident and clear expression of ideas was a key objective of university pedagogical practice. When asked what qualities were preferred in group members, one student declared, "...people who aren't too shy to put forward their opinions" (COD048). Students appeared to assign more importance to communication itself than the knowledge being communicated:

I looked at them and went "Wow! These guys aren't afraid to have a chat and if we're going to be doing an oral presentation, they might be the ones you want to be involved with". (MCC057)

Indeed, students who were able to assert themselves as confident verbal communicators were considered more attractive peers to interact with.

I want each person [in my group project] to be very outspoken and confident. (MCC057)

Students appeared to benefit from their understanding of the tacit communication conventions expected within small group learning activities:

I can never shut up and in the tutorials I'm always chatting. (MCC057)

To me, uhh, tutorial groups, with discussions and group work, is where I feel I thrive. (TLC008)

Many students could recount exposure to group work activities in school and other educational institutions, which they thought afforded them relevant academic experience and knowledge that they could draw upon: "in [highschool] we did group work as well" (TLC007). They expressed confidence in their own ability to engage in small group learning activities, perceiving that they possessed the necessary cultural and linguistic skills (capital): "I knew sort of what was going on and what the tutor was going to expect" (TLC008).

In Bourdieu's terms, confident verbal expression, previous academic experience and cultural and linguistic knowledge appeared to function as valued cultural and academic capital (Naidoo, 2004) in the pedagogical domain, with students perceiving the field to not value the academic and cultural capital brought to it by students from different cultural backgrounds. Further, perceiving value in their own capital, and disvaluing the capital of others, may have contributed to their lack of interaction with students from diverse backgrounds. This is further illustrated in their perception of the

value of English language proficiency within the pedagogical domain, which is discussed in the next section.

English language proficiency. Many students recalled instances where the language competency of fellow students became salient, affecting interactions and the running of learning activities:

Some of these ... you know ... cultures don't have English as their first language so you have to be a bit patient when you're talking to them and not use superfluous language. (TLC007)

Most students appeared aware of, and stressed, the cultural and linguistic capital that they possessed by being native English speakers:

I like to think I use a reasonably high level of English that ... you know I can certainly choose my lingos. I can use more informal forms basically at will. (TLC006)

They were also aware of the impact this had on their interactions with second language speakers:

He pretty much looked up to me in an educational sense and, ah, but just as much because of the language. You know, his language, English is a second language. (TLC008)

I put it in layman's terms. And I mean I try not to do it to the point where it's insulting and patronizing ... but it makes the conversation easier. (TLC007)

Furthermore, there emerged an implied relationship between appearance and perceived English proficiency:

The courses I'm doing are very English based so there are lots of English people [laughs] as in like *Western* people. (MCC107)

Proficient English language appeared to be equated with native English speaking, with the inference that Anglo-looking students were assumed to be more proficient in English than students from visibly different cultural backgrounds.

In sum, students perceived the logic of the pedagogical domain to encourage interactions with peers who were confident and outspoken: "more verbal" (COD048), "the alpha dog" (TLC006). When group work activities were for assessment, students sought group partners who they believed would contribute to the attainment of higher grades. This invariably translated into students seeking peers perceived as having strong verbal participation skills and high levels of English language proficiency. By contrast, when group work activities were not for assessment, students' accounts were more

likely to recognise the value of diversity, and the perceived importance of oral skills appeared to be reduced:

In group activities, you know, having to consider an entirely different point of view just keeps things interesting, it's a good thing. It's [pause 4 seconds] it's just not going to be such a main part of the course. (TLC006)

Further, students associated valued capital with physical qualities: inferring that English proficiency was equated with looking "Western". This generated a space in which the mono-cultural, mono-lingual local student, already well-versed in the academic, cultural and symbolic capital valued by the pedagogical domain, perceived that the field rewarded interactions with peers who possessed the same capital, i.e. other mono-cultural, mono-lingual students, and not students from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds.

Physical domain. The physical or material domain comprised institutional structures within the field which shaped students' interactions. Two key themes emerged, the demographics of the classes and the seating arrangements.

Demographics. Particularly relevant to intercultural interactions were the demographics of classes, primarily their size and their level of visible diversity. Students considered the numerical size of small group learning activities conducive to intercultural interactions:

It's easier to feel safer in smaller groups ... Interaction between different cultures in tutorials is a lot more than outside of tutorials. (COD048)

References to 'safety' and 'intimidation' suggested that larger groups appeared more socially threatening:

It was a little bit daunting at first ... looking around a lecture of 300 people that I didn't know and knowing that I had to form groups with some of these people ... in tutorials then, when it's broken down into a group of say 20 people, it's a lot less intimidating. (BUS061)

The opportunities that small class sizes generated for enabling interactions with peers from different cultures were mediated, however, by the ethnic profile of the class. Students saw interactions as constrained by a lack of diversity within classes:

A: Do you have diversity in your class?

B: [Pause 4 seconds] Within my classes I'd say probably not. (TLC006)

I'm making friendships within my tutorial group but it's not really culturally diverse. (TLC008)

Thus, while small size was conducive to interaction, lack of diversity limited opportunities for this to translate over into actual intercultural relationship development.

Seating arrangements. Interactions were also perceived to be constrained by seating conventions adopted within classes. Students observed that seating patterns formed at the beginning of semester tended to remain fixed throughout the semester, and that these patterns had a strong influence over group formations:

Most of the time ummm you just sort of sit down at the beginning of the semester and you end up working with the group, with the people that were sitting around you. (COD048)

While this tendency is noted in the literature (Dunne, 2009), students in this study suggested that this phenomenon was structured by the field, rather than being the result of student agency. Interestingly, while students observed fixed seating patterns, they did not perceive them to be consciously formed around race or ethnicity: “I guess that does happen but at the time you don’t really notice it” (BUS061). By the end of their first semester, however, only a few students reported working with others from different cultural backgrounds. This suggests that students may inadvertently choose to sit near people from culturally similar backgrounds. This is linked to another theme identified in the data, that is, homogeneity as an important organising principle in social interaction. This perception is discussed in the following section.

Social Domain. The social domain encompasses the purely social engagements in the field, and the logic governing these. These included, for example, informal conversations. They are identified as ‘social’ in contrast to in-class, tutorial discussions that are facilitated by the tutor, or topic or assessment-based discussions among students, which would belong to the pedagogical domain.

Two themes emerged as relevant to intercultural interactions. These were expectations that interactions were bound and limited by their campus context, and passivity toward intercultural interactions. Students’ perceptions of the logic and valued capital associated with these themes, and their influence on intercultural interactions, follows.

Interactions bound by campus context. Many students reported positive social interactions that occurred within small group learning activities: “Group work’s a fantastic thing...it’s a great way to meet people” (MCC057). However, others saw these interactions as context-limited:

Like you don’t just invite someone [from the tutorial group] out, it’s just not how it works. (TLC007)

A few of them from [class]...sort of come up and say hello but we don't really socialise outside. You know, it's really just a catch up and a hello. (TLC008)

There was a strong perception that relationships starting in the classroom should stay in the classroom. For some, this mirrored a broader understanding that university life was distinct from life off-campus: "my uni life and my life are completely separate and they don't go together at all" (MCC107). These students saw the university experience as focused on academic utility: students admitted to being at university "to get study out of the way" (TLC006), but presented this as an imperative of the field, not something they had agency over. They considered social interactions on campus to be vehicles for academic outcomes rather than achieving broader social goals:

P: Most people I've met have been for group projects so far, not really on like a societal level yet ummmmm.

I: So the relationships last semester with your groups, they sort of stayed pretty much as a [interrupted]

P: like a professional level, yeah. (COD048)

Sort of a few times we'd meet up in groups [on campus] and stuff but mostly it was just for work purposes. (BUS061)

Instead, most students reported possessing an existing network of friends either on- or off-campus that provided them with their primary social support structures (social capital), often friends from secondary school:

A: Socially what would your main friendship group be?

B: Probably the people I hung out with last year at school ... they're still my main friendship group. (COD048)

My main friends ... probably four or five ... actually ... probably six or seven people that I went to school with and yeah they're just my core friends and anyone else is sort of just ... fringe. (TLC007)

It is possible that having existing friendship groups reduced the need for students to actively seek social interactions both within and beyond the field, allowing interactions to function primarily as adjuncts to learning, and not extending beyond the field.

Passivity to intercultural interactions. A final theme emerging from mono-cultural, mono-lingual student accounts was the perception that the field did not encourage intercultural interactions as being their responsibility. This is included as a structuring effect of the field rather than an aspect of habitus, as the ways students talked about it made it clear that they saw the field as neither encouraging intercultural

interactions, nor as offering particular opportunities or rewards for such interactions (in fact, it was seen as offering disincentives, as noted above). Some students expected intercultural interaction to occur as a result of exposure to diversity in the class, rather than deliberately seeking it out:

I don't really consciously go "I need to associate with other cultures so I can get this knowledge" just sort of a passive thing that I would believe ... would just inherently come to me through my studies here. (TLC007)

Related, there was a perception that homogeneous social interactions were 'standard' in the field:

I couldn't see one of my friends going over to someone who looks like they are from a different country. (MCC073)

Students appeared to accept this social patterning as though it were inevitable and unchangeable, and removed from their personal agency.

In sum, this research has revealed the ways in which the field of small group learning activities structures interactions within three domains of activity (the pedagogical, the physical and the social), with the logic, or 'rules', and capital valued, within each playing an important role in co-structuring intercultural interactions. These logics were neither uniform nor universal, but varied according to context. For example, students observed that different logics applied to small group learning activities depending on whether they were to be assessed or not. However the logics often coalesced to militate against intercultural interactions. Students were privileged by their appearance, which functioned as symbolic capital, and by existing friendship groups, affording social capital. Further, as members of the dominant ethnic group on campus, they were assured of forming groups and relationships with 'like' people partly as a result of these structuring factors: there was therefore not an imperative to seek out the 'cultural other'.

Capital perceived to be valued in the field thus favoured mono-cultural, mono-lingual, local students. They benefited from being native English speakers (linguistic capital), being confident in their ability to participate and engage in activities within the field (cultural capital), having previous schooling experiences in the same country (cultural and academic capital), possessing established friendship groups (social capital), and being 'white' and 'Anglo' (symbolic capital). The reticence of these students to engage with students from culturally different backgrounds appears partly to reflect their sense that the 'culturally other' student did not possess capital that was valued in the field.

While these findings revealed the logic of the field to have a regulatory influence on intercultural interactions, an exclusively structural analysis fails to account for why students, when exposed to the same small group learning environment, behave differently. If all students followed the logic of the field, then their experiences and behaviours should be uniform. However, students reported intercultural interactions ranging from extremely limited through to experiences that appeared meaningful, rewarding and sustained. Bourdieu's habitus provides a conceptual tool to account for this phenomenon. He argued that social practice is shaped not simply by the structuring and regulating effect of the field in which it occurs, but also by the dispositions that individuals bring to the field, their habitus, which influences decisions that individuals make with regard to how they interact with the field. The next section of this paper focuses specifically on the habitus that students brought with them to the field, and how the habitus co-shaped and influenced intercultural interactions within it.

Habitus as a Mediating Factor in Intercultural Interactions

Student accounts indicated a range of personal dispositions that had an enabling or constraining effect on intercultural interactions. These included differences in motivation to engage, intercultural efficacy, and perceptions of, and attitudes toward, diversity.

Habitus as Enabling

There was a generally held perception that diversity was a positive phenomenon: "diversity's wonderful, it's exciting" (MCC057). However some students expressed a clear motivation to engage with those from culturally different backgrounds: "I seek out people who come from really varied and different backgrounds" (MCC001). Those who expressed clear social goals for university, rather than simply academic or grade-related goals, were more inclined to engage with others more generally: "probably the most important thing to me [at university] would be meeting ... an entirely new circle of friends" (MCC057).

Ethnorelative dispositions, associated with positive intercultural interactions (Endicott, Bock, & Narvaez, 2003), were evident among some students. These students displayed an awareness of their own, and others', cultural positions, and did not diminish or disparage cultural difference:

Not only should they be immersed in our ... culture but I think we need to learn a little bit about theirs to understand where they're coming from. (COD048)

This was linked to a perception of heterogeneous groups on campus: "even when you see people talking in groups there's still a decent [ethnic] mix" (BUS061).

These students did not see the campus as being composed of fixed, exclusive groupings based on race or culture: rather they described a campus in which there was extensive intercultural mixing. Some students also engaged in what social psychologists label as decategorisation processes (Brewer 1996), whereby peers were seen as ‘individuals’, not simply as members of a cultural group:

When you know the people personally ... you realise they are people like everybody else. (MCC107)

Habitus as Constraining

Habitus also constrained intercultural interactions for some students who saw culture as something external, belonging to ‘the cultural other’. Ethnocentrism was evident in their lack of awareness of their own cultural positioning and their active positioning of cultural ‘others’ as different and, on occasion, inferring deficiency:

It is that language barrier ... their lack of familiarity with the language that I’m using and the level to which I can use the language ... I need to drop down my English and they need to try and listen just that bit harder. (TLC006)

A number of students did not recognise the benefits that social interactions could provide, stating that their goal at university was to get “good grades” (MCC073) and focus on the academic ‘task’ aspect of university experience: “[I am at university to] get the study out of the way, so I can go home and relax” (TLC006). Some also perceived intercultural interactions to be difficult and requiring effort, this potentially affecting their motivation to engage with other students:

It’s easier chatting to someone you recognise as associated with you. (TLC007)
I think to do it [interact within persons from different cultural backgrounds] I’d actually have to seek it out ... which would make it somewhat more difficult than I’d like. (TLC006)

Therefore, despite occasions for cross cultural engagement, some students simply chose not to take up such opportunities.

Students also engaged in what Bourdieu referred to as position-taking. The constraining habitus, when enacted, functioned to conserve mono-cultural, mono-lingual students’ dominant position in the field through actions undertaken, including choices not to initiate intercultural interactions, lack of acknowledgement of their own cultural position, positioning of the ‘cultural other’ as removed and deficient, and the choice to perpetuate habitualised seating patterns. These strategies, which simultaneously reaffirmed the value of the capital held by mono-cultural, mono-lingual students while also diminishing the value of other capital, had an agentic quality,

though for most this was unconscious. Interestingly, many of these position-taking strategies were perceived by mono-cultural, mono-lingual students to be structures, or logic, within the field, rather than as position-taking strategies *per se*, effectively deflecting responsibility for their effects, i.e. their lack of intercultural interactions.

These examples of habitus both enabling and constraining interactions illustrate that students brought to the field different dispositions that shaped how they saw and engaged with diversity. For example, a limited number of students reported intercultural interaction experiences in the field that appeared positive and sustained:

P: Yeah everyone's from diff, somewhere different in our group. There's like an Italian dude and a Dutch dude and um, some Malaysian dude and Indonesian girl and there's a few people, another girl from Tasmania, um.

I: Yeah and these are the people that, like you hang out with at Bush Court and things like that?

P: Yeah, yeah. Like yeah my really good friends. (TLC009)

In this instance, the student possessed much of the capital valued by the field (being white, English native speaking and reporting extensive existing friendships on and off campus), yet did not adhere to the restrictive logic of the field. This suggests that their habitus enabled them to take up opportunities to engage with cultural others despite the restrictions imposed by the field.

In other examples, interactions were constrained by habitus. In these cases, when interactions did occur, their potential was not realised. Even when describing interactions that were perceived to be positive and meaningful, students inadvertently revealed an attitude that positioned them as 'superior' in the relationship: 'he looked up to me in an educational sense and ... just as much because of the language' (TLC008). In the following response to a query about engaging with diversity, the student appears to present themselves as open and tolerant, yet actually implies a superior role in the interaction: 'If I've something to say and somebody is willing to listen I'll more than gladly spend the time with them' (TLC006). In these instances the 'cultural other' appeared not to be recognised as a fully equal member of the interaction process.

There were also instances when field effects dominated, negating possible positive effects of habitus. One student (MCC107) reported sustained and meaningful intercultural interactions off-campus, even choosing to fast for Ramadan along with their peers, suggesting habitus that enabled intercultural interactions. However, the student was not able to report any intercultural interaction experiences on campus. This

suggests that the student did not see intercultural interactions as resonating with the logic of the field of small group learning activities.

Discussion and Conclusion

Applying Bourdieu's social field theory allowed intercultural interactions to be studied as situated, complex phenomena, shaped by multiple co-existing, interdependent and, at times, competing factors, at both the individual and broader structural level. Importantly, by focusing on the perceptions, understandings and intercultural experiences of local mono-cultural, mono-lingual students, a group often ignored in research on the intercultural interaction experiences of international students despite their key role (Volet & Jones, 2012), this study was able to gain insight into how privilege and position 'play out', and shape, intercultural interactions within the field of small group learning activities. Mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students perceived intercultural interactions to be governed by implicit and explicit rules that not only appeared to hinder interactions, but simultaneously privileged their position within the field, enabling them to control the intercultural agenda. Further, not only did mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students appear to embody the academic, linguistic and cultural capital they perceived to be of value in the field, there was evidence that they perpetuated their positioning, by reinforcing through their actions (unconscious and conscious) the value of capital that privileged them.

Such findings are consistent with Bourdieu's theoretical concepts, which assume contestation and unequal power within fields. According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 17), "a field is simultaneously a space of conflict and competition ... in which participants vie to establish monopoly over the species of effective capital in it." By applying Bourdieu's theoretical lens to intercultural interactions in small group learning activities, the dominant position of mono-cultural, mono-lingual local students in shaping intercultural interactions was highlighted, and the ways agentic potential within habitus was mediated by the field were also revealed.

These findings are an important contribution to our understanding of intercultural interactions as they occur on university campuses, with much existing research focused exclusively on the experience of non-local students in interactions (Volet & Jones, 2012). This research suggests that if interventions intended to enhance interactions are to be effective, then they need to be considered from the perspectives of all students: the critical role that local students play in shaping outcomes can not be overlooked by institutions endeavouring to facilitate meaningful intercultural interactions.

This study also allowed the pedagogical, physical and social dimensions of small group learning activities to be recognised and their influence in co-shaping interactions revealed, lending support to research advocating the need to consider both formal and informal aspects of curriculum when designing intercultural interaction activities and interventions (Leask, 2009). These three domains had their own logics, and intercultural interactions appeared to be shaped by their location within these domains, and the related logic. While field is not context *per se*, it has been argued that field does function as a dimension of context when it contributes to the meaning and experience of a particular social interaction (Zarycki, 2007). In this study, Zarycki's conceptualisation is extended: field, as multidimensional, actually involved multiple, simultaneous contexts (domains) that interplayed to shape intercultural interactions.

Given the many cognitive and educational benefits that intercultural interactions can generate, and the importance of a receptive host culture to achieve such outcomes (Bourhis et al., 2010), together with the many cognitive and educational benefits that intercultural interactions can generate, the constraints afforded by the logic of the field of small group learning activities, the capital valued within it, and the habitus and position-taking strategies of students that emerged in this study are concerning. While the findings of this research must be considered within the context of its design (the research was conducted on only one site, and was restricted to intercultural interactions as they occurred within small group learning activities), the application of Bourdieu's theoretical lens has highlighted the situated nature of intercultural interactions, and the critical role that university teaching, learning and social experience has in co-shaping positive outcomes.

University policy could begin to address the problem by modifying the rules of the field over which it has power, and broadening the types of capital that are valued within it. This could be achieved through strategies such as developing assessment mechanisms that value the process of intercultural group learning, in addition to recognising academic outcomes. Further, the suggestion in the data of a possible relationship between the demographic profile of small group learning activities, and intercultural interactions within them, points to broader issues relating to admissions, recruitment and widening participation within higher education of all students from culturally-diverse backgrounds (local and non-local). Such practices could be expected to modify the capital valued in, or logic of, the field, thereby mediating local students' privileged positions within it. In turn, this may allow habitus to engage with the field in

a constructive way, improving the likelihood of positive intercultural learning experiences.

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Appendix C: Empirical Paper 3

Scrutinising local students' accounts of positive intercultural interactions: A multidimensional analysis

Cassandra Colvin and Simone Volet

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Scrutinising local students' accounts of positive intercultural interactions: A multidimensional analysis

Abstract: This study examined local students' subjective accounts of their positive intercultural interactions on a university campus. A multidimensional framework was adopted to explore the complexity of intercultural interactions. Key dimensions of positive intercultural interactions were identified and used to analyse the data, including agency, cultural interest, duration, context, affect and self-disclosure. These dimensions were theoretically driven, empirically informed or inductively generated from the data. Systematic analysis of intercultural interactions using the multidimensional framework revealed the magnitude of qualitative differences in students' positive intercultural interaction experiences. While some stories displayed consistently deep or shallow experiences across dimensions, agency, operationalised as the initiation of a positive intercultural interaction, emerged as a distinct dimension. Four meaningful patterns of relationship between agency and intercultural transformation were identified. When agency was limited, intercultural transformation could still be achieved and reciprocally when a positive intercultural interaction was initiated, it did not necessarily lead to transformational outcomes. Cultural interest appeared to play a special role in the development of intercultural transformation.

Keywords: Positive intercultural interactions, Local student, Intercultural transformation, Agency, Multidimensional analysis

Introduction

Today's globally connected world requires citizens who can engage meaningfully and effectively in culturally diverse local and international communities. Universities with culturally diverse student populations are ideally placed to foster the development of such skills, and many have adopted discrete policies surrounding the internationalisation of pedagogy, curriculum and student experience (Leask, 2007; Sawir, 2013). Critical to the successful implementation of this agenda is the extent to which students can be induced to engage in intercultural learning as an integral part of their academic experiences with their peers.

To date, however, despite policy, pedagogical and curriculum foci on internationalisation, as well as increased cultural diversity offering extensive, albeit unrealised, opportunities for students to engage with peers from culturally different backgrounds, there is widespread evidence that intercultural interactions remain limited (Brown, 2009a; Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Tian & Low, 2009). Local students are often reported as the most reticent to engage in intercultural encounters (Strauss, U, & Young, 2011; Summers & Volet, 2008), with their interactions described as “infrequent” (Tian & Lowe, 2009, p. 669) or “minimal” (Summers & Volet, 2008, p. 357), and associated with negative affect such as anxiety (Harrison & Peacock, 2010). Across countries hosting large numbers of international students, local students appear most at risk of missing out on the added value, and long-term benefits that can be obtained from engaging in meaningful intercultural interactions.

A few studies have sought to explore local students’ intercultural interactions, mostly with a focus on identifying why they are limited in depth and scope (Brown & Daly, 2005; Dunne, 2009; Harrison & Peacock, 2010). While this literature has identified a range of factors affecting students’ limited engagement, including motivation (Dunne, 2009), perceptions of threat (Harrison & Peacock, 2010) and self-efficacy (Brown & Daly, 2005), its tendency to focus on challenges or barriers to intercultural interactions provides an incomplete picture of this vexed, psycho-social phenomenon. We have argued (Volet & Jones, 2012) that further insight would be gained by exploring the nature, emergence, and benefits of positive intercultural interactions involving local students.

Consistent with the paucity of research on local students’ experiences of positive intercultural interactions, is the lack of attention given to what constitutes a positive intercultural interaction. Although literature has explored the affective, behavioural and cognitive processes surrounding positive intercultural interactions on campuses (Bowman & Denson, 2011; Harrison & Peacock, 2010), as well as the intrapersonal, interpersonal and intergroup benefits that can be derived from them, little research has scrutinised the specific dimensions that make up such interactions. Furthermore, in light of the literature documenting evidence of intercultural transformation through experience of intercultural interactions (Jones, 2010), the link between positive intercultural interactions and intercultural transformation also needs to be investigated. Indeed, for Savicki (2008), the potential of intercultural interactions to generate transformative outcomes is the “raison d’etre” for promoting them (p. xv).

The study presented in this paper addressed the above issues by conceptualising positive intercultural interactions and intercultural transformation as two distinct, inter-related constructs. Further, and based on the review of several bodies of literature, positive intercultural interactions were conceptualised as multidimensional in nature. It was expected that meaningful patterns might emerge from a systematic analysis of these dimensions, and that such analysis would provide insight, not only into what constitutes positive intercultural interactions from local students' perspectives, but also into the relationship between positive intercultural interactions and intercultural transformation.

Literature Review

Development of Positive Intercultural Interactions

At a theoretical level, the value of intercultural interactions as a vehicle for improving intercultural attitudes and outcomes can be found in intergroup contact, social identity and intercultural communication research. Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory (1954) posits that through intergroup contact one can learn about, and better understand, the other, providing certain conditions (equal status, common goals, acquaintance potential and institutional support) are present. The premise of Intergroup Contact Theory, that such contact has the potential to improve intergroup attitudes and reduce prejudice, is supported empirically (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and has informed other seminal work related to intercultural interactions, notably Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007), Social Dominance Orientation (Sidanius, Levin, Van Laar, & Sears, 2008), and Social Categorisation Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1992). These bodies of research highlight the mediating role social identity, ingroup categorisation and comparison can play in shaping intercultural interactions (Sidanius et al., 2008; Toh & DeNisi, 2007). Anxiety has also been found to mediate intercultural interaction outcomes (Gudykunst, 2005a, 2005b), with evidence that while intercultural anxiety can undermine the quality of an interaction (Stephan & Stephan, 1985), positive intergroup contact can reduce intercultural anxiety, thus increasing the likelihood of future positive interactions occurring (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Stephan & Stephan, 1985).

In the intergroup contact literature (Brown & Hewstone, 2005), a 'positive' interaction is conceptualised as one that is shown to achieve 'positive' outcomes or is experienced as such. Experiential measures eliciting, for example, how enjoyable (Schaafsma, Nezlek, Krejtz, & Safron, 2010) or pleasant (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Mähönen, & Liebkind, 2011) an intercultural interaction was, the extent to which it met one's expectations (Gudykunst, 1992), or how 'liked' or 'respected' the interactant(s) felt

within the interaction (Nezlek & Schaafsma, 2010), are commonly used in empirical studies, on the assumption that such positive experiences will lead to prejudice or anxiety reduction and in turn further positive intercultural interaction outcomes.

Overall however, and despite strong claims for the potential of intercultural interactions to generate positive intercultural outcomes (Brown & Hewstone, 2005), intergroup research has not scrutinised the characteristics and qualities that define positive intercultural interactions occurring in real-life situations. Furthermore, the limited empirical literature that has explored intercultural interactions often conceptualises this construct as unidimensional (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2011), despite claims that intercultural interactions are complex, multidimensional phenomena (Dixon et al., 2010). As a consequence, qualitative variations in the depth and scope of positive interactions have not been investigated systematically. Finally, little research has scrutinised how, and in what ways, positive intercultural interactions are associated with intercultural transformation.

Intercultural Transformation

According to Mezirow, transformation involves “becoming critically aware of one’s own tacit assumptions and expectations” (2009, p. 18) to make one more inclusive, discriminating, reflective and open to the feelings, values and mind-sets of others. A number of scholars have applied Mezirow’s concepts of transformation to intercultural contexts (Hunter, 2008; Selby, 2008). In her review of Mezirow’s concept of transformation, Hunter (2008) observed that transformation involved the development of changed personal frames of reference, or “deep structural shift[s] in premises of thoughts, feelings and actions” with regard to the way we “filter, engage in and interpret the world around us” (p. 94). Similarly, both Selby (2008) and Savicki (2008) argued the potential of intercultural transformative experiences to elicit a depth of cultural engagement, understanding and experience that transcends that experienced within an individual’s existing intercultural meaning scheme.

Intercultural transformation also featured in Kim and Rubens’ (1992) research on the ‘stress-adaptation-growth’ process within intercultural adaptation. Kim and Ruben (1992) argued that stress generated by an intercultural encounter can lead to intercultural adaptation, intercultural growth and ultimately intercultural transformation, whereby individuals are changed “beyond the cognitive, affective, and behavioural limits of their original culture” (1992, p. 404) and emerge with “a broadened and deepened understanding of human conditions” (p. 409). While both Kim and Rubens’, and Mezirow’s (2009) conceptualisations of intercultural transformation emerged

independently of each other, they each see transformation as “a process of growth beyond one’s original cultural conditioning” (Kim & Ruben, 1992, p. 409), resulting in a more culturally-competent individual. Owing to its rich potential to elicit deep intercultural understanding, it is not surprising that intercultural transformation has been advocated in literature as a desired outcome of intercultural interactions on campus, a “golden growth” in the development of students (Lou & Bosley, 2008, p. 239).

Empirical research on the intercultural transformation of local students on home university campuses is limited. The few studies that have explored the relationship between intercultural contact and the intercultural transformation of university students have tended to focus on study abroad programs (Lou & Bosley, 2008), service learning assignments overseas (Chang, Chen, Huang, & Yuan, 2012; Jones, 2010), or international students studying in a host culture (Brown, 2009b). Common across these studies is the focus on transformation arising from intercultural interactions that are situated within a new ‘host’ culture. The potential for intercultural transformation to be generated by interactions occurring within a ‘home’, or local, culture appears to have been overlooked in the literature. Further, and as stressed by Volet and Jones’ (2012) review of individuals in cultural transitions, is the failure of intercultural transformation literature to adopt a rigorous and consistent operationalisation of transformation (refer also to Hunter, 2008; Selby, 2008), with suggestion that research would benefit from a “shared understanding” of the term (Hunter, 2008, p. 93), especially one with “empirical substance” (Selby, 2008, p. 1). In light of Hunter (2008), and Kim and Ruben’s (1992) conceptualisations of intercultural transformation as involving cultural “shifts” in thinking (Hunter, 2008, p. 94), and “growth” (Kim and Ruben, 1992, p. 409), this study operationalised intercultural transformation as a personal, positive change in thinking or attitudes regarding culture-related issues, including one’s cultural worldview, empathy for culture-related issues, or disposition for reciprocal cultural understanding.

Finally, while the literature advocates the pursuit of both positive intercultural interactions and intercultural transformation, how these constructs relate to each other is yet to be examined conceptually and empirically. Gaining insight into what constitutes positive intercultural interactions, and the relationship between positive intercultural interactions and intercultural transformation, requires a systematic examination of the multidimensional nature of intercultural interactions. Based on a review of relevant theoretical perspectives (e.g. intergroup contact, intercultural communication, and friendship development), as well as empirical studies of intercultural interactions in university contexts, five candidates emerged as potential dimensions of positive

intercultural interactions. Each is presented in turn conceptually, with an indication of how it was operationalised in the present study.

Dimensions of Positive Intercultural Interactions

Agency

Personal agency, or the intentional influencing of “one’s functioning and life circumstance” (Bandura 2006, p. 164) is considered to play a key role in the shaping of intercultural interactions (Bennett, Volet, & Fozdar, 2013; Colvin, Fozdar, & Volet, in press; Holmes & O’Neill, 2012). For example, Holmes and O’Neill’s (2012) analysis of an intervention program designed to enhance university students’ intercultural competencies revealed the importance of personal agency in achieving positive intercultural outcomes. Small-scale qualitative studies involving local students also noted the role of agency in co-shaping interactions, alongside broader institutional structures (Bennett et al., 2013; Colvin et al., in press).

Of particular interest to this study is the widely documented apathy of local students to initiate interactions with students from different cultural backgrounds (Brown, 2009a; Dunne, 2009). While research has highlighted multiple factors that may explain why students do not initiate interactions, ultimately, a student’s failure to engage in intercultural interactions is essentially an agentic act. As claimed by Marginson and Sawir (2011), student (lack of) involvement in intercultural interactions represents student “choice and preference” (p. 100). For the purpose of this study, agency was operationalised as the initiation of a positive intercultural interaction by a local student.

Context

While conceptually there is strong claim for understanding the role of context in shaping social interactions (Deaux and Martin, 2003; Kimmel and Volet, 2010), empirical research examining the influence of context on intercultural interactions at university is limited, albeit emerging. Kimmel and Volet’s (2010) research into intercultural interactions within group work activity revealed that intercultural interactions were both afforded and constrained by multiple contextual factors including task characteristics and degree of teacher support. Similarly, Sias et al.’s (2008) study of intercultural friendship development on campus found that contextual factors, such as the cultural profile of the student body, were important in enabling the development of intercultural friendships. Yet few studies have explored the relationship between the depth of an intercultural interaction and the number of contexts in which it took place. Conceptually it is assumed that extending an interaction across multiple contexts will

reduce the likelihood of situation-dependent attitudes or prejudice forming (Ashmore, 1970; Eagly & Diekmann, 2012).

This study is situated within the broader context of a university campus. However, the study was not aimed at eliciting how that context shaped interactions *per se* but rather its focus was on how positive intercultural interactions looked within it. For the purpose of this study, which required in-depth analysis of the qualitative features of intercultural interactions, the target dimension context was operationalised quantitatively to capture the numbers of sub-contexts within the university that an interaction occurred across. In this respect, the sub-contexts (which could include lectures, group learning situations, or informal, social settings) were embedded within the broader university context, yet it was the number, not the nature, of these contexts that was the phenomenon of research interest.

Duration

A number of empirical studies have reported evidence of a relationship between the duration of an intercultural interaction experience and the quality and outcomes of that experience (Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011; Kudo & Simkin, 2003). In their meta-analysis of intergroup friendship development, Davies et al. (2011), tested six measures of friendship assessment on the shaping of intergroup attitudes. They found that “time spent in the company of outgroup friends” (p. 334) and self-disclosure had the largest effects. Kudo and Simkins (2003) reported similar findings in their study of intercultural friendships on a university campus, noting a clear association between the amount of time spent with outgroup friends, and the depth of the relationship. Further, quantity of intergroup contact has been positively linked to reduced intergroup attitudes (Verkuyten, Thijs, & Bekhuis, 2010), and positive interaction experiences and intercultural outcomes (Denson & Chang, 2009). In the present study, duration was operationalised to distinguish interactions that were a one-off occurrence from those that were more sustained.

Affect

There is a compelling argument for the inclusion of affect as a dimension of positive intercultural interactions. Conceptually and empirically (Bowman & Denson, 2011; Esses & Dovidio, 2002) it has been argued that emotion appears intrinsic to, and interdependent with, intercultural interactions, emotion both influencing and being influenced by them. Emotion has been identified as a key factor linking diversity experiences and personal growth (Bowman & Denson, 2011), and mediating the relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice reduction (Pettigrew & Tropp,

2008). Related, Holmes and O’Neills’ (2012) analysis of interactions involving students from mixed cultural backgrounds found that positive affect experienced during an interaction played an important role in successful intercultural interaction outcomes. Positive intercultural interactions have also been found to be instrumental in reducing anxiety, leading to improved future intercultural interaction outcomes (Gudykunst, 2005a, 2005b; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Across studies is evidence that interactions free of anxiety (that is, interactions eliciting positive emotional responses) produce more positive intercultural interaction outcomes.

Finally, and of direct relevance to the present study, is empirical evidence highlighting a link between affect and intercultural transformation (Neuman, 1996). It has been claimed that emotion plays a key role in eliciting critical reflection, an important precursor to transformation (Taylor, 2001, 2007). In this study, affect was operationalised as the emotional responses generated by a positive intercultural interaction.

Self-disclosure

The significance of self-disclosure, or the “process of revealing personal information about oneself to another” (Chen & Nakazawa, 2009), has been claimed conceptually (Taylor & Altman, 1987) and demonstrated empirically (Chen & Nakazawa, 2009; Kudo & Simkin, 2003) as seminal to intercultural relationship development. The theoretical foundation of self-disclosure as a critical component of successful intercultural interactions is found in Social Penetration Theory (Taylor & Altman, 1987). Taylor and Altman argued for the importance of self-disclosure in forging and sustaining friendships and close relationships, owing to its potential to foster intimacy, trust and emotional bonds. Their theoretical argument has received strong empirical support. Self-disclosure has been linked to relational intimacy (Chen & Nakazawa, 2009), the generation of empathy and trust (Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007), and positive outgroup attitudes (Turner & Feddes, 2011). Further, self-disclosure has been identified as an important mediating variable in intergroup contact (Davies et al., 2011). In this study, self-disclosure was operationalised as evidence of personal or intimate information shared between the interactants.

In sum, it was expected that these target dimensions (agency, context, duration, affect and self-disclosure) would be useful to identify qualitative differences in students’ accounts of positive intercultural interactions. In particular, it was expected that the depth of engagement with, or salience of each dimension would vary within and across accounts, thus revealing patterns of qualitative differences in the development

and experiences of positive intercultural interactions. Furthermore, it was expected that qualitative differences in the development and experiences of positive intercultural interactions would contribute to explain differences in intercultural transformation outcomes. These expectations led to three specific research questions.

1. How are the five specific dimensions of intercultural interactions identified in the literature represented in students' accounts of positive intercultural interactions?
2. To what extent do students' accounts of positive intercultural interactions display consistently deep or shallow experiences, i.e. reflect the same degree of salience across dimensions?
3. What meaningful patterns of intercultural interactions can be identified in relation to the achievement of intercultural transformation?

Methodology

This research was grounded in a constructivist epistemology and ontology (Flick, von Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004), with the specific qualities, or dimensions, of positive intercultural interactions the phenomenon being studied. The research recognised positive intercultural interactions as “interactionally and socially constructed” (Kecskes, 2012, p. 39) events, and accordingly sought to elicit, through scrutinising local students' accounts, how they perceived, and ascribed meaning to, their positive intercultural interaction experiences. Indeed, this study's focus on the ‘first-hand’ experience of participants resonates with precepts of phenomenology (Finlay, 2008; Orbe, 2000). However, while the use of theoretically grounded target dimensions of analysis may appear inconsistent with phenomenology's demands for the researcher “to suspend presuppositions” (Finlay, 2008, p. 1), their use in this study provided an analytic structure whereby conceptual understandings and operationalisations of intercultural interactions could be examined iteratively and rigorously in relation to “the interpretive frameworks and practices used by the individuals...to make sense of their everyday relations” (Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2005, p. 704). Moreover, the approach did not preclude the incorporation of inductively driven dimensions during the analysis.

This research was also underpinned by an ontology of positive intercultural interactions as phenomena involving an element of cultural difference (cf. Marginson and Sawir, 2011; Kecskes, 2004). This understanding was indicated to students during the interview, with intercultural interactions described by the interviewer as “involving

peers from cultural backgrounds perceived as different from their own”. While this clarification was intended to guide students, it still provided scope for students to determine the nature of, and qualities inherent in, these interactions, as well as the salience of, and perceptions of, the cultural differences within them.

A final ontological point concerns the study’s conceptualisation of cultural difference within the context of research focused on the ‘local’ student. Much of the present discourse surrounding cultural diversity on a university campus tends to present ‘interculturality’ as a simple dichotomy of local and international. Within this literature lies an implicit understanding that culture, and diversity, are removed from the local, and inherent in the international student (the other). A focus on this dualism can overlook the cultural diversity inherent within the local student population, and how this might shape intercultural interactions. Accordingly, the researchers were careful not to frame questions, or lead discussions with students that could suggest this dualism. Rather, students were simply invited to recount a positive intercultural interaction involving somebody whom they perceived as being from a cultural background different from their own.

Research Site

The research was conducted at a medium-sized ($n \approx 15,000$) metropolitan university in Australia. At the time of the research, 86% of the total student population was local, that is, they were citizens or permanent residents of Australia. Of this population, 73% were born in Australia and 90% spoke only English. At the time of the study, the institution had committed to ‘global perspective’ as a desired graduate attribute, yet had not released policy detailing how this would be achieved.

Participants

Participants were 19 local students in their first-year of study at the university. The 19 participants (11 females, 8 males) represented the entire group of *local* students from within a larger research sample. Nine (47%) students were categorised as mono-cultural and mono-lingual since they only spoke English, and reported an Australian identity. Four participants (21%) were categorised as multi-lingual and multi-cultural as they spoke at least one language other than English and reported a mixed cultural identity (for example Australian-Vietnamese). The remaining six participants (32%) were categorised as mono-lingual and multi-cultural, as they only spoke English, yet also reported a mixed cultural identity (for instance Australian-South African). In light of empirical evidence of relationships between students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds and their experiences with diverse others (Colvin, Volet, & Fozdar, 2014;

Harrison, 2012), it was important that the research sample did not present a limited, homogeneous, cultural and linguistic profile. Accordingly, the cultural heterogeneity inherent in the research sample reflected (and represented) the diversity found in local student populations on many university campuses. Finally, all participants were recruited in the first week of the academic year from large first-year units across a number of disciplines, including business, media, environmental science and education. Participants volunteered for the study and were given a small book voucher (value AUS\$15) as a token of appreciation for their time.

Data

Data were verbatim transcriptions of individual interviews conducted with the 19 participants.

Interview Procedure and Data Collection

The interviews were 50-60 minutes long, and semi-structured around broad, pre-determined themes relating to the research objectives. Participants were asked to recall and describe a positive intercultural interaction that they had experienced on campus. Gentle probes (Polkinghorne, 2005) were used to glean detail about the interaction itself (including where it occurred, who was involved, and circumstances surrounding it), why the interaction was considered positive, as well as any emotions or reactions experienced during and after the interaction. An informal, conversational style was adopted throughout the interviews to create a climate conducive to a sense of safe sharing of experiences (Patton, 2002).

Data Analysis

Development of the coding scheme. The research required a coding scheme that would first, enable intercultural interactions to be analysed as multidimensional phenomena and second, reveal qualitative differences in depth of intercultural experiences across the research sample. Owing to the limited research examining qualities inherent in positive and/or transformational interactions, no existing instrument or protocol that could guide this analysis could be located. The development of the coding scheme therefore used a mixed, integrated qualitative methodology (Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007). It combined a deductive, theoretically driven approach (conceptually informed by the literature review) with an inductive approach that enabled themes inspired by the insights of participants to also be considered as candidates for dimensions (Burla, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2000). The coding scheme was gradually formalised into a rigorous coding process that involved four stages, which enhanced the validity of the analysis.

Stage 1: All text relevant to the research questions was highlighted and tagged. For this purpose, a tag was a 'label' applied to the text that captured its essence. Examples of tags applied at this point were 'friendship group', 'faith', 'purpose of interaction', 'intercultural confidence', 'migrant', 'self-awareness', and heritage or nationalistic terms such as European, South African or Australian. At this stage care was taken to ensure that tag labels were meaningful and reflected the data captured within them (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011). This stage allowed data to be simplified, and inductively driven dimensions to emerge.

Stage 2: Tags were scrutinised and, where appropriate, grouped to the pre-determined dimensions (which also included the pre-determined outcome 'Intercultural Transformation'). Tagged text not 'fitting' the pre-determined dimensions was then scrutinised to identify emerging themes that would become inductively driven dimensions. Consistent with Braun and Clark (2006), a theme was defined as a group of patterned responses or meanings within the data pertaining to something important to the research questions. Only one clear theme could be identified: 'intercultural interactions are good' and a few, more isolated and loosely related, ideas were noted for further analysis, for example, 'purpose of interaction', 'depth of cultural understanding', 'cultural positioning', and 'intergroup thinking'.

Stage 3: The extent to which the text assigned to the pre-determined dimensions and to the emerging theme and ideas generated information needed to answer the research questions was examined. To tease out how 'positive' interactions are differentially experienced and understood by participants, the data had to be relevant to the majority of accounts of positive intercultural interactions, and there had to be some evidence of qualitative differences in how intercultural interactions were experienced across the data set. All the data represented by the pre-determined dimensions met these two criteria and thus were retained. In contrast, the emerging theme, 'intercultural interactions are good' did not meet the second criterion because every single participant reported this as important.

The few isolated and loosely related ideas, identified in the data, were further scrutinised. One was found to fit the deductively driven outcome 'Cultural transformation'. Most of the remaining ideas could be meaningfully assigned to a new, inductively generated dimension called 'Cultural interest'. This dimension was operationalised to capture a student's expressed interest in, or awareness of various cultural elements such as values, beliefs, cultural symbols, and meaning systems, as well as the degree to which students saw their fellow interactant as an equal cultural

being. While ‘Cultural transformation’ (outcome) and ‘Cultural interest’ (dimension) may appear to be focused on similar cultural elements, they are conceptually distinct in that material assigned to ‘Cultural transformation’ demonstrated change or growth in a person’s cultural thinking arising from the intercultural interaction. By contrast, ‘Cultural interest’ captured cultural dispositions that were expressed within the context of the interaction. At the conclusion of this stage, six dimensions were retained: Agency, Affect, Duration, Context, Self-disclosure (all deductive, based on the literature review), and Cultural interest (inductively generated from the data).

Stage 4: It involved the formalisation of the coding tool. To operationalise the degrees of saliency of each dimension, tagged experiences for each dimension were scrutinised and grouped into three discrete levels, ranging from a minimum to a heightened level of experience. Formal descriptions were then generated for each level of experience within each dimension. This process was informed by theoretical and empirical literature where appropriate, or generated inductively. For example, the different levels of experience for duration were generated from the data, ranging from “one-off” episodes through to interactions that were “sustained and ongoing”. By contrast, the levels of depth for self-disclosure were operationalised to reflect Matsushima and Shiomi’s (2002) conceptualisation of internal and superficial aspects of self-disclosure.

Stage 5: Ordinal values were assigned to each of the three levels of experience within each dimension. A shallow level was assigned a 0 or 1, and a deep level a 3. The ordinal values did not reflect a numeric value. Rather, they were intended to represent the degree of saliency or depth of experience within each of the dimensions. This process was inspired by Sandelowski, Voils and Knafl’s (2009) notion of “quantitizing”, or “the numerical translation, transformation, or conversion of qualitative data” (p. 208). It was expected that using ordinal values to represent qualitative differences in levels of experience across the six target dimensions would assist in better revealing patterns within the data.

Piloting the coding scheme: The provisional coding scheme was independently tested on a small sample of transcripts (n=6) by two researchers, one of them not involved in the study. Only one dimension was tested at any time, and researchers met after coding each dimension to discuss, and refine the coding scheme. The final version used for the coding is shown in Table 1.

Reading from left to right, the first column identifies the six dimensions of intercultural interactions. The second column shows the levels of experience within

each dimension, and the value assigned to each level. The third column provides a description of how each level were operationalised, and the fourth column an example of how the code was applied to the data.

It should be noted that a number of dimensions do not have a zero value assigned to them. For the dimensions context and duration the explanation is straightforward: every interaction by definition includes a context and minimal duration. For affect it must be remembered that since participants were invited to discuss an interaction that was positive for them some affect was assumed as an integral part of the design. Consequently, if students did not specifically refer to or describe affect, a value of 1 was used, indicating implicit affect.

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Coding Procedure

Two researchers (one a member of the research team for this study, the other independent to the study) independently coded all data using the coding scheme. They were in agreement for 74.4% of the coding, with agreement rates for each dimension ranging from 68.4 to 89.4%. Discrepancies were evenly distributed across the dimensions and were resolved by discussion. The coding scheme was gradually refined throughout the process to address any ambiguity that contributed to the discrepancies.

Table 1

Coding scheme for positive intercultural interactions

Dimension	Level and value		Description	Example
Agency	Initiated	3	There is evidence that the student sought and initiated the interaction.	"I think I was the one that talked to him first ... I made the first move." (M_100)
	Sought	2	There is evidence the student sought the interaction, but did not initiate it.	"We thought oh, we need to get to know some people. So we all started being friends with others in our class and yeah, we just hit off right away." (T_001)
	Limited	1	The student did not seek the interaction but placed him/herself in a position that enabled it. For instance agreeing to be a member of a culturally-mixed group.	"We were all just sitting together and we just formed [a group]." (B_048)
	None	0	The interaction was imposed on the student. No evidence of agency.	"It was in a tutorial with a subject, or topic, that was given to us ... it was instigated ... by our class interactions." (T_008)
Cultural Interest	Emerging Deep	3	Explicit or implicit interest in cultural dimensions that transcend surface elements to include 'deeper' elements such as their values, beliefs and meaning systems. There is a sense in this category of the student seeing the other as a fellow cultural being.	"Willing to, you know, hear his views ... I really wanted to know and understand" (T_008)
	Surface	2	Interest in cultural elements of the other person focused primarily on surface elements. There is a sense in this category of the other interactant being seen as representing a culture.	"And, you know, I was saying that it would be interesting to ... get the German perspective of what happened...the way it was expressed to me, from the German point of view ... against what I've read, as an English speaker." (T_006)
	Implicit	1	No stated interest in the culture of the other interactant(s).	"I: Was diversity relevant? P: Not really. I mean it was more just evident in yeah, how strong their work ethic was ... it was just another group team." (C_048)
	Explicit lack	0	Stated lack of interest in the culture of the other interactant(s).	
Context	Multiple contexts	3	The interaction occurred over more than one social context, such as in a tutorial, or more informal setting such as a cafeteria. If two contexts are identified, neither of them should be online or virtual. If three contexts are identified, one of them could be online or virtual.	"I: So tell me a little bit about how you met the people in your study group? P: Um, well usually just um in class and then we just traded emails and Facebook accounts and then yeah, and then from there we just decided well exams are coming up so we should get together and just study ... we met in the library." (T_010)
	Two contexts, one of which online or virtual	2	Will involve a 'face-to-face' context, such as a classroom, plus a social media site, such as Facebook.	every person I've met through group work are all on my Facebook ... it's almost like if I don't see them at uni and I don't talk to them at uni, they'll talk to me online. (B_024)

	One context only	1	There is evidence of only one context.	I was actually sitting in the Tav at one time with a friend and ah yeah a fellow came up to the table that, I can't remember his name now but um he was from Singapore, and um he came up to the table and um started talking [did not meet again] (M_057)
Duration	Sustained and ongoing	3	The interaction involved repeated instances of engagement and communication over a period of time. The interaction is ongoing: there appears to be no end to it.	Not applicable
	Sustained but finite	2	The interaction involved repeated instances of engagement and communication over a period of time. Its duration is bound by prescribed time frames. It has ended, or it is clear that it will end soon. An example includes a group work experience in a tutorial that finishes when the teaching period ends.	
	One-off	1	The interaction involved one meeting only.	
Affect	Expressed Affect	3	Affect refers to feelings or emotions. Only affect generated by the process of the intercultural interaction itself is considered. This excludes affect generated by a non-culturally related outcome of the interaction e.g. a good grade. In this category the student describes and elaborates a little on affect generated by the interaction.	"It was amazing ... she was very positive in the end, which made it very , very positive for me, because I knew that she was a person that would be absolutely distraught if that would happen to her ... it's amazing to see." (B_024)
	Minimal affect	2	In this category the student mentions affect briefly, but does not elaborate on it.	"It was just fun." (T_009)
	No affect	1	No specific affect reported (yet all interactions are deemed positive).	
Self-disclosure	Intimate self-disclosure	3	Information was revealed by the other interactant(s) about personal feelings, emotions, values, opinions or insights, particularly information that might seem guarded, not normal, or suggest weakness or vulnerability.	"She'd tell you stories about, you know, her lifestyle ... she had to marry her partner in order for him to stay here because they didn't think that they were a legitimate couple and they didn't want to renew his, his study visa." (B_024)
	Implied and emerging self-disclosure	2	This is when intimate self-disclosure is suggested or implied, but no specific details are provided. This could occur when reference is made to conversation and discussions about each other within the context of a deep friendship.	"I have a friend that I met through one of my umm, units last semester and he's from Africa and he's a really nice guy. ... we enjoy hanging out with each other and we enjoy having lunch and having a coffee together." (T_001)
	Superficial self-disclosure	1	Evidence that demographic, or factual information about oneself was disclosed voluntarily. To be coded 1 it is expected that the student has disclosed information over and above the simple identification of where they are from, or what would have been revealed by the situation or appearance of the person. For instance, the student would discuss aspects of the society or culture they are from.	"She went to my mum's high school ball and she'd never seen she'd never met someone who was openly gay and so when we asked her how was the ball she was like oh it was good I saw a lesbian [laughter] and we just thought oh really good." (M_073)

	No self-disclosure	0	There is no evidence of self-disclosure occurring. Simple references to the student being from another country, or naming the country that student is from, is to be coded as 0.	<p>“P: I think his name is Mohammad I: Do you know where he’s from, what country he is from? P: Not a clue. I’m not sure what Mohammad, what his religion [is].” (M_100)</p>
Intercultural Transformation	Transformative	3	Evidence that the interaction resulted in an element of intercultural transformation. Intercultural transformation refers to a personal, positive change in thinking or attitudes regarding culture-related issues. It is not about cultural knowledge, coded as “Informative”, but cultural worldview, empathy for culture-related issues, or disposition for reciprocal cultural understanding. Ideally an interculturally-transformed student would show increased awareness of their own cultural position and the position of the cultural ‘other’, although this is not essential. Report of increased intercultural confidence is not sufficient to be coded as evidence of intercultural transformation.	“It showed me that I did have a preconceived idea of somebody else ... I think it just made me more aware ... when I thought I was aware before.” (T_008)
	Informative	2	Evidence that the interaction produced cultural knowledge and information outcomes but no intercultural transformation. It could include information about cultural practices in certain countries.	“There’s a guy in one of my tutes who’s from somewhere in Africa ... and he’s telling me about his umm country, about how English colonisers came and, and his, that the tribal kings and the different tribes and how the Northern tribe runs the country and oh, it was pretty interesting.” (T_007)
	Unrelated	1	A positive outcome is identified but it is unrelated to cultural transformation or knowledge, e.g. a good grade for an assignment.	“We got top mark in that um presentation and report as well it was really good.” (B_050)
	No outcome	0	The student cannot cite any outcome from the interaction.	“I can see her on a basis. Um we do catch up here and there ... but I think the only thing just making me talk to her is because we’re doing the same unit ... when I saw her I would just say hi and stuff.” (T_004)

Findings

Dimensions of Intercultural Interactions Represented in Accounts of Positive Intercultural Interactions

The first research question was concerned with how the five specific dimensions of intercultural interactions would be represented in students' accounts of positive intercultural interactions. As expected and displayed in Table 2, qualitative differences in the saliency of the five, deductively generated dimensions as well as the one, inductively generated dimension (Cultural interest) were found across the 19 accounts.

Table 2

Saliency of dimensions in accounts of positive intercultural interactions

Student ID	Agency	Cultural Interest	Context ¹	Duration ¹	Affect ¹	Self-disclosure	Aggregate saliency
B_048	1	1	1	2	1	0	6
C_048	1	2	1	2	1	0	7
B_061	1	2	1	1	1	1	7
T_006	2	2	1	1	1	0	7
M_100	3	1	1	2	1	0	8
T_007	1	2	1	2	1	1	8
M_073	0	3	1	2	1	1	8
M_057	1	2	1	1	3	1	9
T_012	1	3	1	1	1	2	9
T_004	1	1	3	2	1	2	10
T_009	3	1	3	2	2	0	11
T_008	0	3	1	2	3	3	12
T_017	1	3	3	3	1	2	13
B_050	3	2	3	3	1	2	14
M_062	2	3	3	3	1	2	14
T_010	3	3	3	2	2	1	14
B_024	1	3	2	3	3	3	15
M_104	1	3	3	3	3	2	15
T_001	2	3	3	3	3	2	16
Frequency (n and %)							
0 or 1	12 63%	4 21%	10 52%	4 21%	12 63%	10 52%	
2	3 16%	6 32%	1 5%	9 47%	2 10%	7 37%	
3	4 21%	9 47%	8 42%	6 32%	5 26%	2 10%	

¹ Note: there is no 0 coding for this dimension; the lowest level is 1.

Looking down each column (or dimension) and as summarised at the bottom, it can be seen that all levels of depth of experience used in the coding system were represented in students' accounts (0, 1, 2 and 3 for Agency and Self-disclosure, and 1, 2 and 3 for Cultural interest, Context, Duration and Affect).

These findings highlight qualitative differences in the saliency of each dimension, with evidence of substantial variation in the depth of experience of

intercultural interactions within the dimensions of Agency, Cultural interest, Context, Duration, Affect and Self-disclosure.

Consistency in depth of experience across dimensions of intercultural interactions. The second research question addressed the issue of whether accounts of positive interactions would display consistently shallow or deep levels of experience across dimensions.

The shading in Table 2 provides a visual display of possible consistency at the extreme levels of experience of intercultural interactions. Light shading is applied to the seven accounts representing shallow level experiences (Aggregate saliency of 6 to 8), and dark shading to the six accounts representing deep level experiences (Aggregate saliency of 14 to 16).

Shallow level. Looking across the rows at shallow level, strong consistency is shown for the dimensions of Context, Affect and Self-disclosure, all coded at the lowest levels (0 or 1). Cultural interest and Duration display some variation (some 2s) but no coding at level 3. In contrast, Agency stands out as not consistent within an overall shallow level, since all levels of depth are represented (0, 1, 2 and 3). Given Agency is expected to play a critical role from the onset of an experience of intercultural interactions, this deserves closer examination.

Students' subjective accounts of positive intercultural interactions at shallow level illustrate the surface level of their experiences, especially for Context, Affect and Self-disclosure. For example, shallower positive intercultural interactions typically involved one context only, such as a lecture, or group project. Further, these interactions were often 'one off' episodes, or of limited duration. Evidence of self-disclosure in these interactions was also limited: some students did not provide any evidence of self-disclosure, while others reported self-disclosure that tended to be of a factual nature, and did not reveal any insight into one's values, emotions or other personal aspects: "he was talking about how he might be joining, he might look into joining the army or joining ASIO" (T_007).

While these interactions were all presented by students as examples of positive experiences, when asked what emotions these interactions elicited at the time, responses suggested that they generated very little affect:

I: What sort of emotions were you feeling at that time?

P: None, just generally interested in her point of view. I'm not going to say that I was feeling anything that strongly that's worth mentioning. I was just generally interested in her point of view" (T_006)

Common to these accounts were interactions being described as positive on account of academic outcomes, that is, the social potential of these interactions was not recognised. One student, when asked what emotions they felt during their positive intercultural interaction answered, “we got a really good project out of it so it was really good” (C_048). No student cited negative affect.

Related to the overall shallow level of experience was the limited acknowledgement of the role of culture or diversity in intercultural interactions:

I: Was diversity relevant?

P: Not really. I mean it was more just evident in yeah, how strong their work ethic was ... it was just another group team. (C_048)

Where the culture of interactant(s) was considered relevant to the interaction, the focus appeared to be on surface elements of the other person’s culture, with culture implicitly presented from an essentialist and static perspective. For instance, in recounting a discussion with a German student about Hitler and Nazism, one student observed that the interaction was positive because it enabled him to gain insight into “the German perspective” of Nazism, yet he was not able to reveal any insight into deep cultural elements such as values, beliefs and meaning systems.

Deep level. Overall, the dimensions of Cultural interest, Context, and Duration are consistent with deep levels of experience (codings of 2 or 3). Self-disclosure, predominantly coded 2, also displayed deeper levels than for shallow interactions, and four of the interactions displayed deep levels of Affect (coded 2 or 3). However, and as found with shallow interactions, coding for Agency was not consistent with an overall deep level of experience, with no systematic patterns found between Agency and the other five dimensions.

Students’ subjective accounts of deep intercultural interactions illustrate the depth of their interactions across the dimensions. A number of students discussed interactions that were sustained, ongoing, with no expectation of closure:

We started being friends with others in our class ... we just hit it off right away ... we enjoy hanging out with each other and we enjoy having lunch and a coffee together ... we’re just really close ... we’re there for each other. (T_001)

As this example highlights, such interactions could also involve more than one context, extending beyond the context in which they were initially formed. In the above example the student describes an interaction that grew from a meeting in class into a friendship outside of class, encompassing academic and social contexts, an experience common to other students:

In my foundation unit is when I met that um group of people ... so I sorta got to know them in class, but it wasn't until a few weeks later um, we'd exchanged mobile numbers and ... I got a text from them saying if I'm on campus, and I said I was, and then ... we all met up together and I think we all just like went to the café and just like sat down and had lunch. (M_104)

The majority of interactions at the deep level also appeared to involve intimate and highly personal self-disclosure in which information about feelings, emotions, values and thoughts was revealed. Particularly striking across students' accounts was the prominence of genuine cultural interest within interactions. Students saw beyond the surface level of culture, and displayed an interest in deeper cultural elements such as family values, and differing beliefs and meanings (for instance M_062 and B_024). Cultural reciprocity was also prominent in personal accounts, underpinned by the students' implicit awareness of their own cultural positions:

It's an eye opener to learn about their country and everything else ... I actually feel that I'm learning a lot from them, there's a lot I can learn, umm [2 second pause] there's a lot I feel that I can contribute to them as well as they contribute to me. (T_001)

Patterns of Intercultural Interaction Experiences Leading to the Achievement, or Lack of Intercultural Transformation

The third research question was concerned with the identification of patterns in students' experiences of positive intercultural interactions that would be meaningfully related to the achievement, or lack of intercultural transformation. Table 3 presents four meaningful patterns in students' experiences.

These patterns were formed by combining Agency (shallow, deep level) with Intercultural Transformation (lack of, deep level) reported as emerging from the interaction. Data on the other dimensions (Cultural interest, Context, Duration, Affect and Self-disclosure) was used as complementary information.

As can be seen, all four patterns or combinations of levels of depth in Agency and Intercultural Transformation were found in the data. The profile of fourteen out of the 19 students (73%) fitted relatively well with one of these patterns. Unclear patterns were found for five students, and their profile appears at the bottom of the table.

To highlight the contrasting patterns, lighter shading is used to reflect shallow levels and darker shading to capture deep levels of experience for Agency and Intercultural Transformation. The meaning of each pattern is discussed in turn, with illustrations from students' accounts.

Table 3

Meaningful patterns in students' accounts of positive intercultural interactions

	Agency	Cultural Interest	Context	Duration	Affect	Self-disclosure	Aggregate saliency	IC Transformation
1. Initial shallow level of Agency leading to lack of IC transformation								
B_048	1	1	1	2	1	0	6	1
C_048	1	2	1	2	1	0	7	1
B_061	1	2	1	1	1	1	7	1
2. Initial deep level of Agency leading to lack of IC transformation								
B_050	3	2	3	3	1	2	14	1
M_100	3	1	1	2	1	0	8	1
T_009	3	1	3	2	2	0	11	1
3. Initial shallow level of Agency leading to deep level IC transformation								
M_073	0	3	1	2	1	1	8	3
T_008	0	3	1	2	3	3	12	3
B_024	1	3	2	3	3	3	15	3
M_104	1	3	3	3	3	2	15	3
T_012	1	3	1	1	1	2	9	3
T_017	1	3	3	3	1	2	13	3
4. Initial deep level of Agency leading to deep level IC transformation								
T_001	2	3	3	3	3	2	16	3
T_010	3	3	3	2	2	1	14	3
Unclear patterns								
T_004	1	1	3	2	1	2	10	0
T_007	1	2	1	2	1	1	8	2
M_057	1	2	1	1	3	1	9	2
T_006	2	2	1	1	1	0	7	2
M_062	2	3	3	3	1	2	14	2

Pattern 1: Initial shallow level of Agency leading to lack of Intercultural Transformation. Overall, Pattern 1 displays limited Agency (1) associated with shallow levels of Context, Affect and Self-confidence (0 or 1) leading to lack of Intercultural Transformation (1). Only Cultural interest and Duration displays some saliency (2) but there is no coding at the deepest level (3).

Students' accounts illustrate the lack of agency vis-à-vis the initiation of intercultural interactions. Most interactions appeared to have occurred by chance, or as a consequence of where students happened to be sitting in class at the time, "we were all just sitting together and we just formed yeah" (B_048). There was little evidence in

students' accounts of any deep interest in, or awareness of, the cultures of others in the group. When cultural interest was reported, it was associated with surface aspects such as "work ethic" (C_048). Furthermore, interactions appeared to be restricted to one context, with no evidence that the interaction extended beyond the completion of the group assignment. Finally, none of these three students reported any intercultural transformation. All outcomes of their positive intercultural experience seemed restricted to academic benefits (typically grades):

We got top mark in that um presentation and report as well it was really good.
(B_048)

We got a really good project out of it so it was really good. (C_048)

Pattern 2: Initial deep level of Agency leading to lack of Intercultural Transformation. In contrast with Pattern 1, Pattern 2 displays deep levels of Agency (all coded 3), yet no Intercultural Transformation (all coded at 1). This pattern represents a group of students who initiated an intercultural interaction but one that did not lead to intercultural transformation. Consistent with Agency were Context and Duration, with some coding occurring at the deepest level (3) for both dimensions. In contrast, but consistent with the lack of ultimate intercultural transformation, were the findings for Cultural Interest, Affect and Self-disclosure, coded dominantly at shallow levels (1).

All students referred to their role in initiating the interaction:

I was the one that talked to him ... I made the first move, and then he kind of sidled up so I could talk to him. (M_100)

However, while personal Agency was present (in contrast with Pattern 1), the low level of Cultural interest, Affect, Self-disclosure, and Intercultural Transformation reported mirrored that found in Pattern 1. The outcomes of the interactions appeared limited to study, "getting it [study] done" (T_009), with no reference to broader cultural or social concerns.

Pattern 3: Initial shallow level of Agency leading to deep level Intercultural Transformation. Pattern 3 was the dominant pattern (n=6), and represented students whose intercultural interactions involved shallow levels of Agency (all coded 0 or 1), but who eventually reported deep levels of Intercultural Transformation (all coded 3). Within this pattern, the coding for Context, Duration, Affect and Self-disclosure were not consistent, most containing some coding at shallow and deep levels of experience. Only Cultural interest appeared strongly associated with Intercultural Transformation (all coded 3).

The interview data illustrates these findings, with evidence of personal, positive changes in thinking about, or attitudes toward, culture-related issues:

It's changed my whole outlook on people that come here on study visas and that are rejected from the government from starting here or living here. ... from that experience with her, I, I don't seem to take uni for granted anymore and I don't seem to pass judgment on people that are here. (B_024)

The interactions appeared to trigger personal reflection on one's own cultural values and assumptions, suggesting deep level intercultural transformation:

The time with Mohammad was such an eye-opener because I did have preconceived ideas ... I think waking me up to, you know, me thinking I don't have preconceived ideas and I'm very accepting, but especially that time, it actually showed me that I did have a preconceived idea of somebody else. (T_008)

Yet, no student in this group indicated they had initiated the intercultural interaction. Rather, their intercultural interactions were reported as events that just happened:

We all had to get to know each other ... in class but it wasn't until like a few weeks later um, we'd like exchanged mobile numbers ... and I got a text from them saying if I'm on campus and I said I was and ... then we all met up together. (M_104)

or were owing to situational and institutional factors, such as seating patterns, or imposed group work arrangements:

We basically did an activity where we spent two minutes talking to each person in the class and we'd all move round so you'd have to write down things you have in common. (T_017)

Common across students' accounts within this pattern was a sense that intercultural interactions were not sought, but simply accepted, and that a deep level of Cultural interest was present in the interactions, which could explain the experience of intercultural transformation.

Marriage is, she, from Croatia, she said her family, it was, marriage, the first-time marriage was the marriage for the rest of their life ... And she was brought up with all those values but because she saw how much he needed to stay here, she, she ignored the values. (B_024)

Some students appeared to see beyond the surface elements of culture, focusing on 'deeper' cultural elements such as values, beliefs and meaning systems, which they

considered to be an important aspect of their interaction, a realisation that they had perhaps not anticipated.

Pattern 4: Initial deep level of Agency leading to deep level Intercultural Transformation. Pattern 4 displays congruence at deep level across all five dimensions (Agency, Cultural interest, Context, Duration, and Affect, all predominantly coded 3), and deep Intercultural Transformation (also coded 3). Interestingly, Self-disclosure was not fully consistent with this pattern, with some coding at shallow levels.

In sum, the four patterns identified in Table 3 highlight the mixed findings vis-à-vis the role of Agency in intercultural interactions for the achievement of Intercultural Transformation. While two patterns (1 and 4) were congruent, two were not (Patterns 2 and 3), highlighting how experiences of positive intercultural interactions are multidimensional, evolving events that cannot be predicted on the basis of individual agency.

Discussion

This study provided empirical support for a multidimensional conceptualisation of positive intercultural interactions. The identification and application of six target dimensions (some theoretically-driven, others empirically-informed, or inductively-derived) allowed students' accounts of positive intercultural interactions to be analysed as complex phenomena, involving qualitative differences in experiences, and evolving over time. The lack of consistency in depth of experience across the nineteen accounts highlights the limitations inherent in the analysis of intercultural interactions as a unidimensional construct (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2011), and lends support for research that accommodates a multidimensional conceptualisation of intercultural interactions (Dixon et al., 2010).

The magnitude of qualitative differences across students' accounts of positive intercultural interactions was striking. Some accounts involved meaningful and sustained experiences, others were shallow and casual. The finding that some interactions consisted of shallow, one-off encounters may in part be explained by the design of the study, which invited students to recall and describe a positive intercultural interaction they had experienced on campus. It is reasonable to expect that those students who did not have much experience of such interactions would have described an intercultural encounter that they considered closest to the interviewer's request. Such encounters would inevitably reflect superficial and limited engagement in positive intercultural interactions. Another explanation may be that some students conceptualised their intercultural interactions as deep when they were in fact shallow

experiences: by failing to imagine intercultural interactions as deeper and more sustained, these students may inadvertently limit their future intercultural interaction experiences, a theme also explored in Halualani's (2010) research on intercultural contact among university students.

Particularly noteworthy was the finding that agency, operationalised as individual initiation of the intercultural interaction, was the least congruent dimension amongst shallow level (lowest aggregate saliency) as well as deep level accounts (highest aggregate saliency). This study revealed that when agency was limited, deep level positive experiences could emerge provided other target dimensions were present in the interaction.

Further, the study generated empirical support for four meaningful patterns of association between agency and intercultural transformation, these patterns representing combined high and low levels of the two constructs. The level of agency exercised in the interaction was shown to be both congruent with, and inverse to, the level of intercultural transformation generated. This means that initiating an intercultural interaction may not necessarily lead to intercultural transformation, and reciprocally, reticence to initiate an intercultural interaction does not necessarily preclude transformational outcomes. The findings call for a more nuanced approach to the claim, often made in the literature, that it is local students' reluctance to engage in intercultural interactions that impedes intercultural transformation (Dunne 2009; Brown 2009a).

Significantly, the study's findings suggest that deep level intercultural transformation was systematically associated with high levels of cultural interest, regardless of the level of agency. What could not be determined on the basis of the data, though, is whether the interaction itself generated cultural interest, or if cultural interest was a pre-existing disposition brought to the interaction. Notwithstanding, it could be argued that the evidence of strong cultural interest within an intercultural interaction can mediate the negative effect a lack of initiative might play in shaping intercultural interaction outcomes.

Of particular interest was the experience of the six students who reported no, or limited agency, yet high levels of cultural interest and intercultural transformation. This pattern illustrates that a student's failure to initiate an intercultural interaction does not necessarily represent a lack of interest in cultural diversity. If one assumes that students are entering intercultural interactions with cultural interest, then the question must be posed, why is it that students who are interested in diversity and culture do not initiate intercultural interactions on university campuses? A possible answer may be found in

the broader social context within which the interaction occurred, an issue examined in Kimmel and Volet's (2010) research. While it is argued that universities' teaching, learning and academic spaces provide rich opportunities for intercultural interactions (Brown, 2009b), it is also possible that the social and academic structures of universities conflict with personal agency, and as a consequence impede the development of meaningful interactions (Bandura, 2006). Future research should pay more attention on the role of contextual elements in shaping intercultural interactions on campus.

Shelton, Richeson and Bergsieker's (2009) research into the role of attribution bias in (White) participants' explanations of why they did not engage in interracial interactions suggests another possible explanation. Their findings suggest a link between how individuals explained their own, and their interaction partner's, reticence to engage in interactions, and latter interaction outcomes. Of relevance to the present study is their finding that attributional bias was more pronounced in lower-prejudice than higher-prejudice participants. Shelton et al.'s (2009) research therefore suggests that while low-prejudiced individuals might appear as open to intercultural interactions, they may experience more difficulty forming intercultural relationships than their higher-prejudice peers.

While this study did not seek to investigate student's explanations as to why they did, or did not, initiate an intercultural interaction, its findings resonate in part with those of Shelton et al. (2009). Of note was the finding that cultural interest was more systematically associated with intercultural transformation than agency, and that one's cultural interest was often divergent from, and on occasion inversely related to, the level of agency displayed in the interaction. Future research will need to elucidate the nature of relationship between cultural interest (and prejudice), one's propensity to initiate an intercultural interaction, and explanations assigned to decisions to, or not to, engage in intercultural interactions.

Finally, while this study highlighted the potential for intercultural transformation to be generated by deep levels of positive intercultural interactions, there was no empirical evidence to suggest that they were causally connected. Deep level positive intercultural interactions (high aggregate saliency) did not necessarily generate intercultural transformation, and similarly, deep intercultural transformation could emerge from interactions experienced partly at a shallow level, provided cultural interest (and sometimes self-disclosure) were present. Furthermore, the intercultural interactions that displayed the highest aggregate saliency across dimensions, and those that revealed achievement of the highest level of intercultural transformation, were not

fully overlapping, except at the very lowest and highest levels. This finding provides support for the value of distinguishing experiences of positive intercultural interactions and intercultural transformation. Although a relationship is expected, the conditions under which positive intercultural interactions lead to intercultural transformation needs to be further examined, ideally from multiple perspectives. To date, the study of positive interactions tends to be grounded in the intergroup contact literature (Allport, 1954; Tajfel & Turner, 1992) that emphasises the importance of positive outgroup contact for prejudice reduction and the fostering of harmonious intergroup relations, with positive affect playing an intrinsic role. By contrast, intercultural transformation is grounded in Mezirow's (2009) transformational learning theory, which emphasises the potential of intercultural interactions to invoke a change in one's cultural outlook. Thus, at the conceptual level, the two phenomena are distinct: the former emphasising the importance of positive affect, and the latter the need to challenge and shift cultural perspectives, worldviews and attitudes. A multiple theory perspective is likely to be useful to shed more light on this phenomenon.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insight into the intercultural interaction experiences of local students, it relied on students' subjective and reconstructed accounts of their intercultural interaction experiences. It is possible that these accounts were influenced by a social desirability effect generated by the context of the interview. Also, the research's exclusive reliance on self-reports prevented triangulation of data that could have been achieved by including observations, or the accounts of the fellow interactants. Further, while the small sample size adopted in this study was suitable for in-depth, qualitative analysis of intercultural interactions as a complex social phenomenon (Crouch and McKenzie 2006), it precludes any generalisation of the findings to other contexts. Finally, and related, while the study recognised local students as a culturally and linguistically diverse population, the small sample size prevented the exploration of possible relationships between a students' cultural background, and the nature of their intercultural interaction experiences.

Conclusion

Overall, this study contributes to the limited body of literature (Brown & Richards, 2012 is one example) that has explored the intercultural transformation of local students on their home campus and the potential of intercultural interactions on home campuses to generate intercultural transformation (Jones & Brown, 2007). The present study counters the inferred premise in other research (e.g. Savicki, 2008), that

intercultural transformation is best achieved when students engage in intercultural interactions outside the home campus. It showed that positive and transformative intercultural experiences can be generated from interactions with the cultural diversity present on a student's home campus.

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Appendix D: Empirical Paper 4

A multi-theoretical analysis of the relationship between local students' perceptions of ethnic identity and accounts of positive intercultural interactions.

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A multi-theoretical analysis of the relationship between local students' perceptions of ethnic identity and accounts of positive intercultural interactions.

Abstract

This study adopted a multidimensional and multi-theoretical identity lens to explore ethnic identity's role in affording or constraining intercultural interactions on a university campus. Specific focus was on the determination of relationships between how a student conceptualised their ethnic identity, the salience they assigned to it, and the depth at which they experienced an intercultural interaction. An identity map instrument was developed to assist students to graphically deconstruct their identity, and to capture the salience they assigned to their identity dimensions both removed from, and within the context of, the positive intercultural interaction. The study found that while ethnic identity assumed heightened salience within the context of the positive intercultural interaction, students perceived other identity dimensions as more salient, challenging the often (implied) dominant salience of ethnic identity within intercultural interactions. This pattern was consistent across interactions experienced at a deep and shallow level. However, strong relationships were found between how a student conceptualised their ethnic identity and the depth of their interaction. These findings are discussed through the lenses of Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney) and Social Identity Perspective (Tajfel & Turner) theories.

Introduction

Despite increasing levels of cultural diversity on university campuses (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007), there is evidence that local student uptake of intercultural interactions on university campuses remains limited (Dunne, 2013), this threatening to diminish the many positive social, intercultural, and learning outcomes that can be achieved through them. It is therefore not surprising that intercultural interactions on university campuses have been the focus of much inquiry, with research finding them to be influenced by an array of intra-individual, psychological elements

(including a student's intercultural communication efficacy and competence (Brown & Daly, 2005), motivation and emotion (Bowman & Denson, 2011), as well as broader contextual and sociological elements (including institutional structures, such as teaching, learning and assessment practices (Colvin, Fozdar, & Volet, 2013). They are therefore highly complex events requiring scrutiny through multiple theoretical and methodological lenses.

Ethnic identity is one lens often employed to analyse intercultural interactions. While ethnic identity literature lacks conceptual consensus as to how it should be defined and measured (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011), common to most interpretations is an understanding that ethnic identity involves the ethnic- and culture-related processes, meanings and understandings employed by persons to determine and define who they are. Further, one's ethnic identity and intercultural interaction experiences are argued conceptually (Phinney & Ong, 2007) and empirically (Azmitia, Syed, & Radmacher, 2008) to be interdependent, each appearing to shape the other.

However, despite these conceptual and empirical claims, research exploring the role ethnic identity plays in shaping intercultural interactions within the context of a university campus is limited. Further, while emerging literature has made important contributions to our understanding of the relationship between ethnic identity and intercultural interactions, it has tended to overlook the role that other social and personal identity dimensions might play in co-shaping intercultural interactions between university students. As such, the presumed dominant salience of ethnic identity over other identity dimensions within the context of an intercultural interaction has not been fully scrutinised, and empirical literature may be failing to capture the depth and complexity of identity's relationship to intercultural interactions on university campuses.

This study addressed these issues by adopting a multidimensional identity lens to explore ethnic identity's role in affording or constraining positive intercultural interactions on a university campus. Students' perceptions of, and meanings assigned to their identity were scrutinised, allowing for patterns between students' conceptualisations of identities and intercultural interaction experiences to be revealed. This study's focus on the positive intercultural interactions of local, 'majority' students complements current intercultural interaction literature, which has tended to focus on the experiences of non-local, 'minority' students, and the identification of barriers to intercultural interactions.

The Relationship between Ethnic Identity, and Intercultural Interactions on Campus

Ethnic Identity as Social Identity

Social Identity Perspective theories (Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) argue that the link between the salience of one's social (or group) identity, and one's intergroup behaviour is driven by processes of evaluation and comparison. The theories contend that one's social identity is central to one's self concept, and that persons identifying strongly with a particular social group (that is, their ingroup) will seek to enhance their group's status and distinctiveness via the attitudes they adopt toward, and the behaviours they engage in with persons outside the group (the outgroup). Group status and hierarchy are at essence in these theories: groups are not equally positioned, with certain groups enjoying a higher status than others. Further, the desire for higher status groups to want to protect their dominant position can lead to behaviours and attitudes that exclude and discriminate against outgroups (Hehman et al., 2012), and potentially militate against meaningful interactions.

Social identity literature exploring intercultural interactions at university often employs an ethnic identity lens. Links have been found between the strength of one's ethnic identity, one's propensity to perceive threat from an outgroup, and the adoption of behaviours that will exclude and derogate them (Morrison, Plaut, & Ybarra, 2010). Further, these behaviours appear to be heightened among individuals perceiving themselves to belong to a majority ethnic group (Korf & Malan, 2002). For example, longitudinal research conducted by Sidanius, Levin and colleagues (Sidanius, Levin, Van Laar, & Sears, 2008) into the relationship between ethnic identity (explored through a social dominance orientation lens) and intercultural interactions occurring on a university campus found evidence that 'membership' of an ethnic group (suggesting strong ethnic identity) was associated with heightened 'status-legitimising' orientations and a reduced quality of intercultural interaction with outgroups. Further, these behaviours appeared more pronounced in local 'white' students than students from any other ethnic group.

Ethnic Identity as Developmental

By contrast, developmental psychology offers a differing explanation of how ethnic identity influences intercultural interactions. Within this literature, ethnic identity is conceptualised to be processual and developmental, with the stage of 'development' (or 'status') of one's ethnic identity influencing one's internal sense of self and

ultimately interaction outcomes. Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney, 2008; Phinney, 1993; Phinney & Ong, 2007) dominates this body of literature, her work in turn informing other conceptual and empirical studies (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Weisskirch, & Rodriguez, 2009). Drawing on the theoretical work of Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1966), Phinney proposes a model of 'statuses' through which a person's ethnic identity can progress, ranging from ethnic identity diffusion (lack of a clear ethnic identity) to ethnic identity achievement (involving a clear understanding of one's ethnic identity), in which a person will benefit from having acquired "a relatively stable and secure sense of themselves" (Phinney & Ong, 2007, p. 275).

Empirical studies informed by developmental psychology precepts have found that a stronger ethnic identity is typically related to higher self-esteem (Umaña-Taylor, 2004), lower-level depression (Torres & Ong, 2010), maladaptive and adaptive psychosocial functioning (Schwartz et al., 2009), and ultimately higher quality intercultural friendships (Way, Santos, Niwa, & Kim-Gerverey, 2008). Similarly, Syed and Azmitia's research into intercultural interactions involving ethnically diverse college students found a "close connection" between one's ethnic identity status and ethnic behaviours, attitudes and beliefs (2010, p. 218), with evidence that the more developed one's ethnic identity status was, the more likely they were to engage in intercultural experiences that were "personally meaningful" (2008, p. 210). Therefore, in contrast with research informed by Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007), in which a heightened ethnic identity was found to militate against positive intercultural interactions, developmental psychology (Phinney, 2008) suggests that a heightened ethnic identity will facilitate them.

The Case for Integrating the Literatures

The mixed outcomes of the above literatures reflect the diverse theorisations and operationalisations of ethnic identity framing intercultural interaction research. However, recent commentary has challenged the traditional separateness of the ethnic identity literatures (Côté, 2006), arguing it to be counterproductive to the pursuit of the "full richness and complexity" (Vignoles et al., 2011, p. 10) of how, and in what ways, ethnic identity is associated with, and shapes, intercultural interactions. Accordingly, while focused on exploring the relationship between ethnic identity and intercultural interactions, this study did not impose on the participants a fixed operationalisation of ethnic identity that represented a particular theoretical framework. Rather, it sought to elicit the conceptualisations, meanings and understandings students themselves assigned

to their ethnic identity, and the relationship between these and their intercultural interaction experiences.

Ethnic Identity within a Multidimensional Identity Lens

Finally, there is strong conceptual claim for the study of identity as a multidimensional construct (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007) recognises that individuals hold multiple social categorisations simultaneously, and that the degree of ‘overlap’ perceived to exist between these memberships can shape how individuals engage with an outgroup (Crisp, Turner, & Hewstone, 2010). Related, conceptual research ground in intersectionality (Stirratt, Meyer, Ouellette, & Gara, 2008) argues that identity is not simply comprised of multiple dimensions (such as ethnicity, gender, class, and faith), but that the meaning of one’s identity is determined by the relative salience of the different identity dimensions (Jones & McEwen, 2000), as well as how the dimensions intersect (Narvaez, Meyer, Kertzner, Ouellette, & Gordon, 2009). These ontological complexities vis-à-vis identity are also recognised by Phinney, who observes that, owing to the “different types of identities and different developmental periods” it is “impossible to use single models or unitary approaches” to its study (2008, p. 104). There is therefore conceptual support for multidimensional ethnic identity research that not only seeks to understand the meanings assigned to identity dimensions, such as ethnic identity, but that also tries to establish the perceived importance of ethnicity relative to other dimensions. To date, empirical studies exploring the relationship between ethnic identity, other dimensions of identity and actual intercultural interactions are limited. It implies that intercultural interactions may have been analysed through an incomplete identity lens, and the salience of, and relationship between, ethnic identity and other identity dimensions within the context of an intercultural interaction not being fully revealed.

Conceptually, the study presented in this paper adopted a multidimensional operationalisation of identity that allowed the salience of ethnic identity relative to other identity dimensions to be revealed. Methodologically, inviting students to describe each identity dimension allowed insight into how students understood, and constructed their identity.

A “Person-in-Context” Perspective

Conceptual and empirical literature also highlights the need to explore ethnic identity in context, arguing that changing social contexts can challenge the meaning and salience of social identities (Bliuc, Ellis, Goodyear, & Hendres, 2011; Dixon, Durrheim,

& Tredoux, 2005; Ethier & Deaux, 1994). Yet, empirical research that considers the “contextual rootedness and specificity” (Dixon et al., 2005, p. 701) of intercultural interactions is limited, which has restricted insight into the “context-specific ways in which participants themselves construct the meaning” of both their identity, as well as broader intercultural relations (Dixon et al., 2005, p. 701).

Research Aims

The study presented in this paper aimed at exploring ethnic identity within the context of positive intercultural interactions as they occur on a university campus.

Three research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What is the salience of ethnic identity relative to other identity dimensions within a positive intercultural interaction?
2. What is the relationship between the salience of ethnic identity and the depth of a positive intercultural interaction?
3. How do students conceptualise their ethnic identity, and how do these conceptualisations relate to the depth of positive intercultural interactions?

Methodology

The research adopted a mixed method methodology, supplementing phenomenological methodological approaches (Giles, Smythe, & Spence, 2012) with data elicited from graphical maps. While this choice of methodology may appear inconsistent with a purely phenomenological approach, it still positioned students’ perspectives and meanings as central phenomena in the research. The identity maps had three purposes. First, they functioned as “visual summaries of data, understanding and relationships” (Enrick, 1972, p. 1). Second, they had the potential to function as visual cues or prompts for the students, possibly facilitating their representation of concepts that might otherwise be difficult to articulate, while also “prompting recall in ways that traditional data might not” (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009, p. 77). Third, they allowed identity to be explored empirically as a multidimensional and intra-related construct (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

Research Site

The research site was a medium-sized ($n \approx 15,000$) metropolitan university in Australia. At the time the research was conducted, 86% of the total student population was local, that is, they were Australian citizens or permanent residents. 73% of all local students were born in Australia and 90% spoke only English.

Participants

Participants were 19 first-year local university students (11 females, 8 males). The students were culturally and linguistically diverse: only nine (47%) students were categorised as mono-cultural and mono-lingual. Participants were recruited in the first week of the academic year from a number of academic disciplines, including business, media, environmental studies and education. Participants volunteered for the study and were presented with a small book voucher (value AUS\$15) as a token of appreciation for their participation.

Data

Data were 19 transcriptions of the individual interviews conducted with each participant, and thirty-eight identity maps completed during the interviews (each participant completed two identity maps).

Interview Procedure and Data Collection

Interviews were 50-60 minutes long, and semi-structured around broad, pre-determined themes relating to the research objectives. Data were generated by two, related parts of the interview.

Part 1: Accounts and prompted reflections of a positive intercultural interaction. In the first part of the interview, students were asked to recall and describe a positive intercultural interaction that they had experienced on campus, including details about where it occurred, who was involved, why they considered the interaction to be positive, and to reflect on any emotions or reactions that they experienced during and after it.

Part 2: Students' perceptions of their identity. The second part of the interview aimed to explore the salience of ethnic identity relative to other identity dimensions within a positive intercultural interaction. This was done in two steps. First, students' perceptions of their personal identity unrelated to a particular context were captured, and second, their perceptions of their identity in the context of the positive intercultural interaction identified in Part 1 of the interview were sought. This exercise was facilitated by the use of an identity map instrument, which required students to graphically deconstruct their identities, and signal the salience they assigned to different identity dimensions. A detailed description of the identity map instrument ensues, this subsequently followed by an outline of the procedure adopted in this part of the interview.

Identity map instrument. The identity map instrument was inspired by a combination of Narvaez's (2009) 'Identities and Roles Visual Clue' instrument,

developed to study the intersection of sexual, ethno-racial, gender and other identities, and Beltman and Wosnitzas' (2008) 'Circles Task' instrument, designed to identify the relative importance of motivational influences. Narvaez's (2009) instrument is directly relevant to this study as it offers a visual support for self-reflective accounts of identity that accommodates the salience multiple and intersecting dimensions. A limitation of Narvaez's instrument, however, is that it does not allow the *relative* importance of the identity dimensions to be revealed or measured. Although Beltman's Circles task instrument does not address issues of identity, it provides a graphic template that captures the relative degree of importance of target concepts that was considered transferable to this study.

The identity map instrument consists of an A2 size sheet of paper and a pack of 13 cards. On the sheet of paper are three large, concentric circles surrounding an inner core (representing the Individual). The circles represent different degrees of importance. The inner circle, closest to the core, was labelled 'Very important'; the middle circle 'Important'; and the outer circle 'Still important but less important'. On the bottom right hand corner of the sheet of paper is a rectangle labelled 'These descriptors do not apply to me'. A copy of the map as presented to the students is shown in Figure 1.

11 of the cards are 'descriptor' cards, each labelled with an identity dimension, such as gender or ethnicity, and some examples of how the dimension could be interpreted. For instance, the 'Ethnicity' card has the examples 'nationality, language, accent, heritage, race'. The remaining two cards are blank for students to include any identity dimension that they felt was not covered by the descriptor cards. A list of all 'descriptor' cards is presented in Table 1.

My Identity Map

Interview Details:

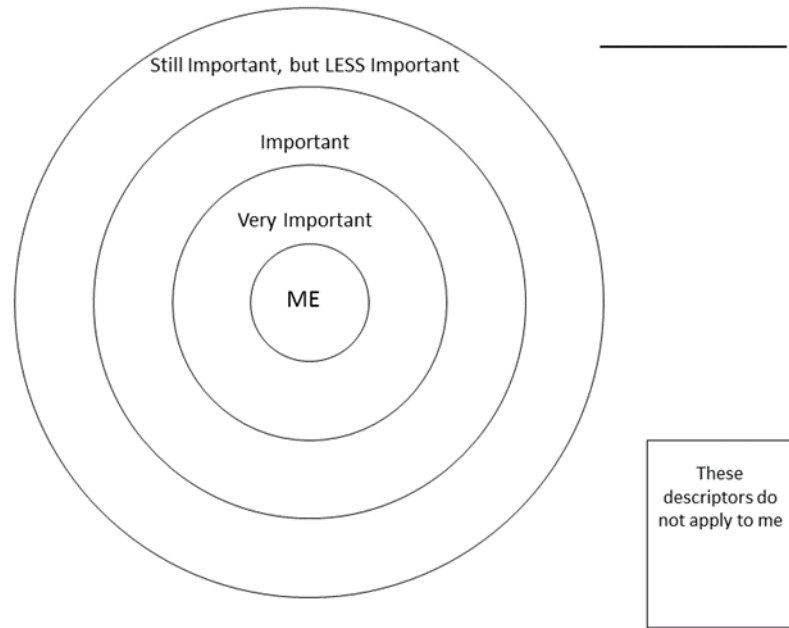


Figure 1. Identity map

Identity map instrument procedure. First, students were asked to complete an identity map that captured how they perceived their personal identity (i.e. unrelated to a particular context). Students were advised that they could interpret the dimension cards anyway they wished, and were instructed to place the ‘descriptor’ cards they considered important to their identity on the most appropriate circle of the identity map (to reflect degree of importance), or on the ‘Do not apply to me’ rectangle. Students were then asked to explain what their chosen ‘descriptor’ meant to them, either during or at the end of the placement process, depending on what was perceived as the best time to maintain a natural conversation flow. A sample completed personal identity map is shown in Figure 2.

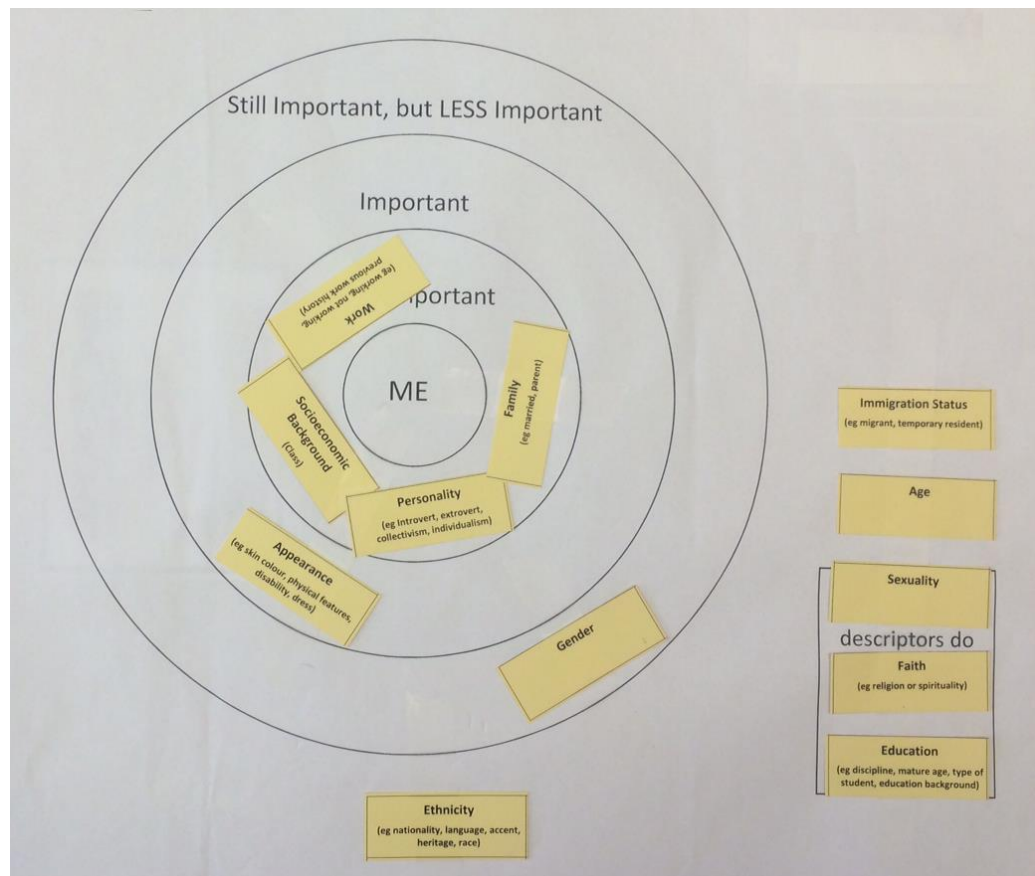


Figure 2. Sample completed identity map

Once their personal identity maps were completed, students were invited to recall the positive intercultural interaction they had described earlier in the interview. They were then asked to complete a second identity map that represented how they saw their identity within that positive interaction, with prompts to explain what their chosen descriptor cards meant to them. Since only three blank cards were applied by students in this process, these were not included in data analysis.

Table 1

Card labels used in identity maps

Card Label	Text on Card
Ethnicity	eg nationality, language, accent, heritage, race
Family	eg married, parent
Appearance	eg skin colour, physical features, disability, dress
Education	eg discipline, faculty, tutorial, mature age, type of student, education background
Personality	eg Introvert, extrovert, collectivism, individualism
Work Status	eg working, not working, previous work history
Socioeconomic Background	Class
Personality	eg Introvert, extrovert, collectivism, individualism
Faith	eg religion or spirituality
Gender	<i>No text</i>
Age	<i>No text</i>
Immigration Status	eg migrant, temporary resident

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved the independent analyses of three data sources: the prompted accounts of positive intercultural interactions; the identity maps; and the conceptualisations of, and meanings assigned to, ethnicity identity dimension cards.

Analysis of data source 1: prompted accounts of positive intercultural interactions. Two independent researchers coded these accounts using Colvin and Volet's (Under review) Intercultural Interaction Coding Instrument. This instrument allows intercultural interactions to be scrutinised across six dimensions (agency, cultural interest, context, duration, affect and self-disclosure). Data was first analysed qualitatively, this revealing significant differences in depth of experience across the six dimensions, before being "quantitized" (Sandelowski, Voils, & Knafl, 2009). "Quantitizing" was operationalised as "the numerical translation, transformation, or conversion of qualitative data" (Sandelowski et al., 2009, p. 208), and its application to the data allowed meaningful patterns to be revealed. Ordinal values (range 0-3) were assigned to each of the six dimensions of intercultural experience, with lower numbers representing minimum or no experience, and higher numbers deeper levels of experience. Ordinal values were totalled to provide an "aggregate saliency", which represented depth of experience across all intercultural interaction dimensions (a higher aggregate saliency indicating a deeper level of experience within the intercultural

interaction). A summary of the analysis of students' subjective accounts of positive intercultural interactions is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Aggregate saliency of positive intercultural interaction experience (n=19)

Student ID	Aggregate Saliency	Depth of Interaction
B_048	6	Shallow
C_048	7	Shallow
B_061	7	Shallow
T_006	7	Shallow
M_100	8	Shallow
T_007	8	Shallow
M_073	8	Shallow
M_057	9	
T_012	9	
T_004	10	
T_009	11	
T_008	12	
T_017	13	Deep
B_050	14	Deep
M_062	14	Deep
T_010	14	Deep
B_024	15	Deep
M_104	15	Deep
T_001	16	Deep

This table displays the aggregate saliency, that is the aggregate depth of experience across six dimensions of intercultural interaction experience. The lowest seven aggregate saliency scores are lightly shaded to reflect intercultural interactions experienced at a shallow level. By contrast, the highest seven aggregate saliency scores reflect intercultural interactions experienced at a deep level, and are darkly shaded.

Analysis of data source 2: identity maps. The first step of this analysis involved assigning each circle in the identity maps a numeric value: 3 for the inner circle, "Very important"; 2 for the middle circle, "Important"; 1 for the outer circle, "Still important but less important". For each of the two maps (representing, respectively, perceived personal identity, and perceived salient identity in a positive intercultural interaction), record was made of the specific identity dimension cards that were applied, and the level of importance assigned to each of them.

The second step involved tabulating data from each of the maps, and calculating both the frequency and weighted frequency of each 'descriptor' card. Frequency was operationalised as the number of times a particular identity dimension card was applied to the map. For example, if 7 students applied the card labelled 'Ethnicity' to their

personal identity maps, its frequency would be 7. By contrast, weighted frequency was calculated by totalling the numeric values assigned to each of the identity dimension cards. For example, if each of the 7 ethnicity cards were placed in the inner circle “Very important”, they would each attract a value of 3, and the weighted frequency of the ethnicity card would be 21.

The salience of an identity dimension was determined by its weighted frequency, with a higher weighted frequency indicating higher salience. However, where weighted frequency was the same for two or more identity dimensions, higher salience was assigned to the dimension with the higher frequency.

Analysis of data source 3: prompted descriptions of the ethnicity identity dimension. This analysis examined the meanings students assigned to the “Ethnicity” identity dimension card in their identity maps. Braun and Clarks’ (2006) thematic analysis method was adopted, since it was perceived as lending itself to the epistemological goals of phenomenology, which underpinned the present research. A strength of Braun and Clarks’ method is its focus on both “semantic” and “latent” (2006, p. 83) levels of analysis, providing a progression from explicit and ‘surface’ interpretations of the data, through to analysis that considers the “underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualisations” (2006, p. 84) behind it. In this study, the progression from ‘surface’ interpretations to ‘underlying ideas’ was done in three steps, which are presented in Table 3, with some examples.

Table 3

Tag, theme and interpretative-concept generation

Tags	Themes	Meta-themes	Interpretative concept
Nationality, Chinese, Australian, Migrant, Background, Pride	Identity as heritage	Individual – ‘my’ heritage – not in comparison	<i>Intra-individual Inherent quality</i>
Vietnamese-Australian, Chinese-Australian, Identity as fixed, Identity as fluid	Bicultural identity	Individual	
No choice, Chosen, Negotiated, Constructed, Removed, Switch	Origin of identity	Individual	
Important, Not important, Defines me, Who I am	Importance of identity	Individual	
Spirit, Faith, Language, Food, Dress, Appearance, Accent, Essentialism	Surface or deep nature of culture	Individual and relational	<i>Intra-individual and Interpersonal</i>
Difference (seeing or not, salience), Stereotype, Compare, Contrast, Recategorisation (finding common superordinate identity elements), Sameness, Comfort from sameness, Suggested homophily, Colour blindness	Intergroup	Relational	<i>Interpersonal Relation to others</i>
Privilege, Power, Whiteness, Minority/majority, Reciprocity/Equal, Empathy	Cultural position	Relational	

The first step involved scrutinising all data relating to student description of the ethnicity card. Each comment was given a preliminary ‘tag’ (first column in Table 3), a brief term or phrase that captured the essence of a passage of text. Examples of tags included bicultural identity, nationality, heritage, stereotype, reciprocity, seeing cultural difference, ethnicity as part of self, ethnic identity as important, ethnic identity as not important, ethnic identity does not matter, not having an identity, identifying similarity, and language. It can be noted that some of these tags expressed exactly opposite views.

In the second step, tags were grouped into seven, empirically generated themes (second column) that reflected broader constructs. For instance, tags labelled nationality, migrant, and Australian were assigned to one theme called “identity as heritage” and those labelled privilege and power to another called “Cultural position”. The other five themes were: bicultural identity, origin of identity; importance of identity, intergroup, and surface or deep nature of culture.

The third step involved an analytical search for underlying interpretative concepts (fourth column) that would capture the complex nature of perceived ethnic identity, as revealed through the seven identified themes. Emerging from this analysis was a distinction between themes that highlighted the perceived intrapersonal, *inherent quality* of ethnic identity in an individual, and themes capturing ethnic identity in terms of *relation to others*. The interpretative concept labelled inherent quality was characterised by frequent references to ethnic identity as “I” or “my”. In contrast, the interpretative concept labelled *relation to others* often included references to “they”, “them” or “we”. To maximise the robustness of these concepts, data was read several times to ensure that the themes captured within them, reflected the broader data set.

While the processes of tag, theme and interpretative- concept generation were primarily inductive and iterative, the researchers were aware that their analysis did not occur in an “epistemological vacuum” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84) and that they both consciously and sub-consciously, may have brought to the analysis explicit and tacit knowledge of those constructs, which may have inadvertently shaped how data were interpreted.

Findings

RQ1: What is the Salience of Ethnic Identity Relative to Other Identity Dimensions within a Positive Intercultural Interaction?

Table 4 compares the findings of the analyses of each student’s two identity maps. The top part of the table presents students’ perceptions of the salience of identity

dimensions unrelated to a particular context, and the bottom part their perceptions of the same identity dimensions within the context of a positive intercultural interaction.

The analyses of students' identity maps as unrelated to a particular context revealed personality and education as the two most salient identity dimensions, both in their frequency and weighted frequency. These were followed by family and work. Out of the 11 dimensions proposed for consideration, ethnic identity emerged as 8th out of 11 in terms of its overall salience.

By contrast, the analyses of students' identity maps within the context of a positive intercultural interaction revealed ethnic identity to have assumed heightened salience (3rd out of 11), yet personality and education were still perceived by students as more salient identity dimensions. These findings show that, while the salience of ethnicity strengthened in the context of the positive intercultural interaction, the criticality of personality and education identity dimensions did not appear to be affected.

RQ. 2 What is the Relationship between the Depth of a Positive Intercultural Interaction and the Salience of Ethnic Identity?

This question was addressed by exploring possible associations between students' perceptions of the salience of ethnic identity and the depth at which students experienced a positive intercultural interaction. Analysis focused on two sub-groups of students: those experiencing intercultural interactions at the shallowest (n=7) and deepest (n=7) levels. Findings are presented in Table 5

The structure of Table 5 is similar to Table 4, in that it reveals the frequency, weighted frequency and rank order salience of identity dimensions (both unrelated to a particular context and within the context of a positive intercultural interaction). However, data for each context is broken down further according to the depth of intercultural interaction experience.

Table 4

Students' perceptions of the salience of identity dimensions (n=19)

a) Unrelated to a particular context

	Personality	Education	Family	Work	Gender	Age	Appearance	Ethnicity	SEB	Faith	Immigration
Weighted frequency ¹	43	43	37	29	29	27	23	20	18	13	1
Frequency	18	17	14	16	14	11	14	11	12	9	1
Salience rank order	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

b) Within the context of a positive intercultural interaction

Weighted frequency ¹	50	37	17	8	11	22	19	31	11	8	8
Frequency	18	16	9	4	8	10	9	16	7	5	5
Salience rank order	1	2	6	11	7	4	5	3	8	9	9

¹max=57

Table 5

Students' perceptions of the salience of identity dimensions according to depth of positive intercultural interaction (n=14)

a) Unrelated to a particular context

		Education	Personality	Family	Work	Ethnicity	Age	Gender	Appearance	SEB	Faith	Immigration
Deep n=7	Weighted Frequency¹	19	13	12	11	10	10	8	5	4	3	0
	Frequency	7	6	5	6	5	4	4	4	3	2	0
	Salience Rank Order	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Shallow n=7	Weighted Frequency ¹	16	17	13	11	7	10	12	12	6	6	1
	Frequency	6	7	6	6	5	4	6	7	5	5	1
	Salience Rank Order	2	1	3	6	8	7	5	4	9	9	11

b) In the context of a positive intercultural interaction

Deep n=7	Weighted Frequency¹	15	19	11	3	12	8	2	3	3	3	5
	Frequency	6	7	4	1	6	3	2	1	2	2	3
	Salience Rank Order	2	1	4	9	3	5	11	9	7	7	6
Shallow n=7	Weighted Frequency ¹	14	18	2	5	13	8	6	8	2	3	3
	Frequency	6	6	2	3	6	5	3	4	2	2	2
	Salience Rank Order	2	1	10	7	3	4	6	5	10	8	8

¹ max=21

Identity dimensions unrelated to a particular context. Analysis of identity maps unrelated to context revealed that education, personality, work and family were selected as more important than ethnicity by both sub-groups. While the same proportion of students from each sub-group selected ethnicity (5 students out of 7), slightly more weighting was given to it by the deep-level sub-group. The major difference between the two sub-groups emerged for appearance, which assumed a higher salience among students who reported shallow level positive intercultural interactions.

Identity dimensions within the context of a positive intercultural interaction. Within the context of a positive intercultural interaction, education and personality again emerged clearly as the two most salient identity dimensions for both deep and shallow sub-groups. However, the salience of ethnicity increased significantly, now ranking just after education and personality for both deep and shallow sub-groups. Interestingly, the salience of appearance across the two sub-groups of students became more divergent in this context.

In sum, the findings of this analysis suggest that while ethnicity assumed higher saliency within the context of a positive intercultural interaction, personality and education were consistently assigned more importance by participants both when unrelated to a particular context, and within the context of a positive intercultural interaction. Further, the salience of ethnicity did not appear to vary according to the depth at which the interaction was experienced, with both sub groups assigning the dimension similar weightings in both contexts. However, the sub-groups diverged with regard to the weighting they assigned to the other identity dimensions.

RQ. 3. How do Students Conceptualise their Ethnic Identity, and What is the Nature of the Relationship between these Conceptualisations and the Depth of their Positive Intercultural Interactions?

Each aspect of the question is addressed in turn

Conceptualisations of ethnic identity.

First interpretative concept: Ethnic identity as inherent. This first interpretative concept addresses the inherent quality of ethnic identity, as reflected across a continuum ranging from ethnic identity as intrinsic to ethnic identity as extrinsic from one's sense of self.

At the intrinsic end of the continuum, students described ethnic identity as "who I am" (T_010) and "just who you are" (MCC_062). Ethnic identity was suggested to be dynamic and fluid, often involving ongoing internal negotiation. For instance, one

student observed, “[my ethnicity] in a sense it does define me but it doesn’t. I have to kind of find my own self and where I sit” (T_001). Bicultural identities were typically presented as integrated, one student describing her bicultural identity as a “merge” or “blend” (T_010), while another, who identified as “part Spanish, Chinese, Irish, growing up here [in Australia]” observed “I kind of feel all these [identities] do come to play” (TLC_001).

By contrast, at the extrinsic end of the continuum, ethnic identity was presented as reified, removed from the individual, and optional - something that could be ‘accessed’ by the student at will:

How I see it [ethnic identity] is how it relates to me and how I use what I see.
(T_006)

You’re sort of attaching yourself to a certain community. (T_007)

Ethnic identity was described in shallow, if not cursory, terms. References to ethnic identity as nationality (for instance “Australian” (M_073) or “English and Australian” (B_061)), or as one’s “heritage” (B_061) were common, although there was little reflection on what that identity actually meant to the student.

Related, a small number of students suggested that they did not have an ethnic identity, again reinforcing an understanding of ethnic identity as removed, almost discretionary:

[Ethnic identity] I don’t think that would apply. (B_048)

I don’t really have any ethnic ties. (T_007)

Accompanying these perceptions was an understanding that ethnic identity was stronger in the ‘cultural other’:

He’s the minority in a sense so his information is exotic and interesting whereas my information is dull and standardised. (TLC_007)

While the majority of these students self-identified as mono-cultural Australian, a small number self-identified as bicultural. Yet, when probed about what a bicultural identity meant to them, these students typically discussed surface cultural elements, most notably appearance, with many students seeing their bicultural identity as linked to, and reflected in, how they look. For instance, one student described “feeling” Australian yet “looking” bicultural:

I’m just like oh I’m Australian until someone says what background are you and I say ‘Oh yeah’. (B_048)

Further, within these students’ accounts, bicultural identities were not presented as integrated, but as separate entities:

Do I want to be a Pom at one stage, or do I want to be Australian at the other. So I've always liked the fact that I can switch. (M_100)

Implicit to the above is an understanding that a bicultural student has agency over the ethnic identity they adopt, and that it is not dynamically negotiated. Further, the delineation of one's bicultural ethnic identity into two discrete ethnic identities suggests an essentialist conceptualisation of them.

Second interpretative concept: Ethnic Identity as relation to others. The second interpretative concept is concerned with how students saw their ethnic identity relative to others within the context of a positive intercultural interaction. While some students were acutely aware of differences between their own ethnic identity, and that of their fellow interactant(s), other students appeared to look beyond these differences, instead seeking to find commonality with their intercultural peer(s).

In the first group of students, differences in ethnic identities were presented as "the integral part of the conversation" (T_007). Related, other students referred to differences, or "contrasts" (T_006) in ethnicity forming the "basis for the exchange" (M_073). Ethnic difference assumed heightened salience in these accounts: "the entire conversation was based on difference" (T_007).

Many of these interactions appeared to be founded on essentialist and surface understandings of culture. One student spoke of the benefits of learning about China from a Chinese student:

She was Chinese so she did know what she was talking about when she was talking about China, if she was, I don't know, French talking about China it would have been slightly odd. (M_073)

Another student described their interest in learning about the "German perspective" of Nazism from a German student. At times, essentialist interpretations veered on stereotype. For example, references were made about "good" and "hardworking" Asian and "laid back" Australian students (B_048).

By contrast, other students sought to see beyond ethnic and cultural differences between themselves and their interactant(s). While some students recognised ethnic or cultural difference within the interaction, they engaged in processes that appeared to reduce its salience. For instance, one student observed that while he and his friend had different skin colours, this was not relevant in their interaction, declaring "what's on the inside is, for me, more important" (T_001). Other students described interactions formed around common identity dimensions with their peers, including a common experience as migrants (B_024). Other interactions appeared to be formed on the

strength of shared interests (B_050), common intrapersonal qualities such as humour (T_001), or genuine empathy for each other (B_024). Further, relationships tended to be founded on equal cultural positioning, with students aware of their role as cultural agents within the interaction, and receptive to the benefits of cultural reciprocity. For instance, when commenting on the benefits of positive intercultural interactions, one student observed:

It gives me a better understanding of my own [ethnic identity] plus theirs.
(T_001)

In sum, two broad interpretative concepts vis-à-vis how students understood ethnic identity were identified. Within the first conceptualisation, ethnic identity was recognised as an inherent, intrapersonal quality that was present across a continuum that ranged from intrinsic to extrinsic from the self. Within the second, ethnic identity was conceptualised in relation to others along a continuum of difference and commonality. The extent to which students' conceptualisations of their ethnic identities (reflected in these two broad, interpretive concepts) related to the depth of their intercultural interaction experience is examined in the next section.

Relationship between conceptualisations of ethnic identity, and depth of positive intercultural interactions.

Systematic patterns were found between how students conceptualised their ethnic identity, and the depth of their positive intercultural interaction. Students who conceptualised ethnic identity as extrinsic were more likely to perceive ethnic and cultural difference as salient within a positive intercultural interaction, and typically experienced interactions at a shallow level. By contrast, students who conceptualised their ethnic identity as intrinsic to them were more likely to see beyond ethnic and cultural difference and typically experienced intercultural interactions at a deeper level. Figure 3 presents a summary of these patterns.

In Figure 3, the two boxes represent the two foci of the research question. The top box represents experience of intercultural interaction, the bottom box student conceptualisations of ethnic identity. Within each of these boxes, solid, horizontal arrows represent continuums of experience or understanding. In the top box, the horizontal arrow reveals the 'depth' of a student's positive intercultural interaction experience. In the bottom box, the two, horizontal arrows represent the two identified interpretative conceptualisations of ethnic identity, that is, 'ethnic identity as inherent', and 'ethnic identity as relation to others'. The poles for each of the three continuums are captured in small, text boxes on either side of each horizontal arrow. For instance, for

the continuum ‘depth of positive understanding’, the poles ‘Shallow’ and ‘Deep’ are depicted (respectively) on the left and right hand sides of the horizontal arrow.

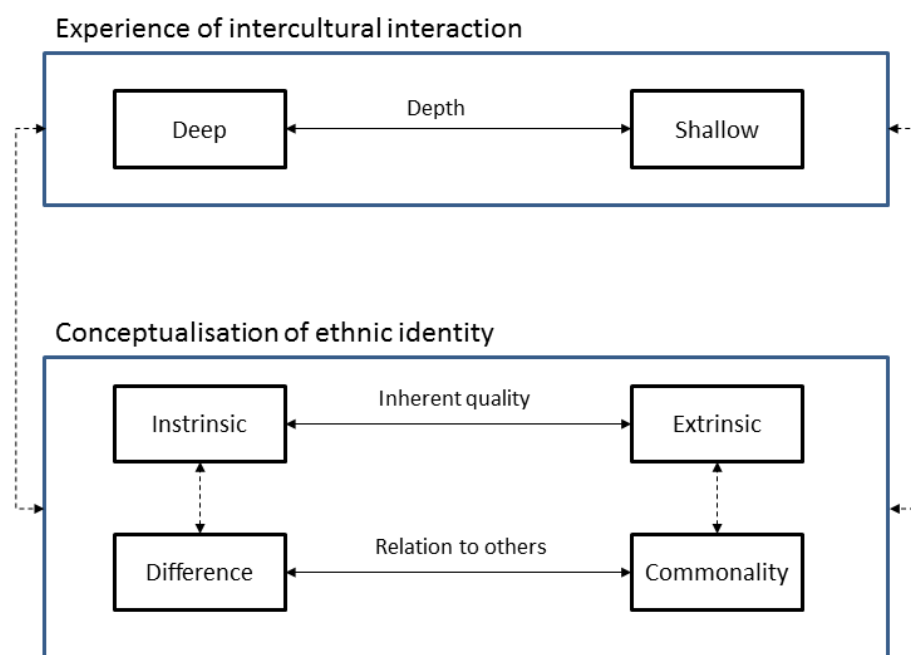


Figure 3. Figure showing patterns between the depth of a student’s positive intercultural interaction, and their conceptualisation of ethnic identity across the two identified interpretative concepts.

In contrast with the solid, horizontal arrows, the vertical, dashed connector lines represent the relationships between the three continuums. Reading down the three right-hand side of the diagram, it can be seen that positive intercultural interactions experienced at a shallow level were generally associated with conceptualisations of ethnic identity as extrinsic, and in which difference was salient. By contrast, the left-hand side of the figure shows the converse: that positive intercultural interactions experienced at a deep level were typically associated with conceptualisations of ethnic identity as intrinsic to one’s self, and in which commonality was salient.

Discussion

The findings presented in this paper contribute to understanding the role of ethnic identity in shaping the positive intercultural interaction experiences of local students on a university campus. Conceptualising and operationalising identity as multidimensional allowed the salience of ethnic identity, as compared to other dimensions of identity, to be revealed. Exploring students’ perceptions of their identity both within, and outside of, a positive intercultural interaction enabled relationships

between ethnic identity and context (in this study operationalised as a positive intercultural interaction on campus) to emerge. Further, the analysis of students' meanings and understandings of their ethnic identities afforded insight into patterns between how students conceptualised their ethnic identity and the depth at which they experienced a positive intercultural interaction.

The data elicited by the identity maps suggest that the salience of ethnic identity within the context of an interaction appears to differ little according to whether or not the interaction was experienced at a deep or shallow level. At face value, these findings appear to contradict the tenets of Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney, 2008; Phinney, 1993; Phinney & Ong, 2007), and Social Identity Perspective theories (Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 1987), that posit a relationship between the depth of one's ethnic identity and actual intercultural interaction outcomes. However, the map data did reveal that ethnic identity assumed a lower saliency than both personality and education identity, even in the context of a positive intercultural interaction.

When considered in isolation, the identity map data suggest that the broader, educational context within which the interaction was situated may mediate the salience of ethnic identity, and play its own role in co-shaping intercultural interaction outcomes, a theme explored in recent studies (Colvin et al., 2013; Kimmel & Volet, 2010). However, while data generated by the identity maps appeared to not support a relationship between ethnic identity salience and intercultural interaction outcomes, significant, systematic patterns did emerge between how students understood their ethnic identity, and the depth at which they experienced their positive intercultural interaction. Indeed, there was found to be an inverse relationship between the extent to which students felt their ethnic identity was intrinsic to them, and the salience they ascribed to ethnic difference within the context of the interaction. That is, students who described their ethnic identity as inherent or innate to how they saw themselves were more likely to see beyond ethnic difference in the context of the positive intercultural interaction, and to experience positive intercultural interactions at a deep level. By contrast, students who appeared to be unaware of their ethnic identity, or expressed shallow, or removed, understandings of their ethnic identity, were more likely to report ethnic identity difference as salient within the context of a positive intercultural interaction, and to experience positive intercultural interactions at a shallow level.

In this respect, the relationships found between the two interpretative concepts of ethnic identity and depth of positive intercultural interaction experience validate the

fundamental precepts of Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney & Ong, 2007), and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007). If interpreting the data through the lens of Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development, the conceptualisation of ethnic identity as extrinsic to one's self resonates with Phinney's "diffused" ethnic identity status, that is, one in which individuals "show little interest in or understanding of their ethnicity" (Phinney & Ong, 2007, p. 479). By contrast, the conceptualisation by other students of ethnic identity as intrinsic, reciprocal, and negotiated resonates with Phinney's "mature" ethnic identity status, one in which individuals understand "the meaning and implications of their ethnic group membership for themselves" (Phinney & Ong, 2007, p. 479). While previous studies revealed relationships between how ethnically-diverse individuals conceptualise and experience their ethnic identity and the depth of their intercultural interactions (Moin Syed & Azmitia, 2008), this findings that ethnic identity development may play a role in shaping intercultural interaction experiences of local, predominantly mono-cultural, mono-lingual students. This is an important contribution to the literature, contrasting with previous research that showed ethnic identity played only a limited role in shaping intercultural interactions of majority group members (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

By contrast, the second interpretative concept's focus on ethnic identity difference within an intercultural interaction revealed conceptualisations of ethnic identity resonating with Social Identity Theory and related literatures (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007). This study found that the more salient ethnic identity difference was within the context of a positive intercultural interaction (suggesting heightened intergroup thinking processes), the more likely the interaction would be experienced at a shallow level. Further, interactions revealing cognitive processes that sought to see beyond ethnic difference, or that mediated the salience of difference in an interaction, were more likely to be experienced at a deeper level. Therefore, just as findings arising from the first interpretative concept provide empirical support for Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney, 2008; Phinney, 1993; Phinney & Ong, 2007), so too do the findings arising from the second interpretative concept (ethnic identity as difference) lend empirical support for the tenets of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1992; Turner et al., 2007), and the mitigating role intergroup categorisation and comparison can play in shaping interaction outcomes. Thus, these findings suggest that ethnic identity salience, when measured simply as perceived importance, appears to have little effect on

intercultural interaction experiences, yet meaning and understanding of ethnic identity, also a form of salience, do appear to be related to the depth of intercultural interactions.

While the identity map data did not appear to support a relationship between ethnic identity salience and the depth of a positive intercultural interaction, its multidimensional operationalisation of identity allowed the salience of ethnic identity relative to other identity dimensions to be revealed. Although the data revealed an (albeit expected) heightening of the salience of ethnic identity within the context of an intercultural interaction, personality and education identity were consistently perceived as more salient, both within, and removed from, the context of the intercultural interaction. This suggests that understanding the role of identity in shaping intercultural interactions is enhanced by the adoption of a multidimensional lens. Further, while the rank salience assigned to ethnic identity did not appear to differ significantly across the two student groups (that is, students who experienced interactions at either a deep or shallow level), the map data suggested that the salience of other identity dimensions did. Most notable was the dimension appearance, which assumed a heightened salience for students who experienced intercultural interactions at a shallow level, suggesting a possible relationship between how one perceives and understands one's appearance, and how this might relate to intercultural interaction experiences.

The integration of two differing bodies of ethnic identity theory allowed deeper insight into cognitive processes shaping intercultural interaction experiences than might be achieved from the application of a single theoretical lens. Indeed, the findings suggest that the two identity processes were working simultaneously, with evidence that a mature ethnic identity (developmental model) was found to be strongly associated with cognitive processes that mediated against intergroup thinking (social identity perspective theories), and deeper intercultural interaction experiences. On the other hand, diffused ethnic identity (developmental model) was found to be strongly associated with heightened intergroup thinking (social identity perspective theories) and shallow intercultural interactions. Thus, while much identity research is situated within one or other of these major theoretical paradigms, these findings remind us of the dynamic, multi-layered and complex nature of ethnic identity, and the need to adopt research methods that allow this complexity to be revealed.

Finally, this study's focus on ethnic identity, (as constructed, understood, and experienced by local students), and the role that this plays in shaping their intercultural interaction experiences is a welcome addition to a field of research that has tended (albeit unintentionally) to focus on the experiences of persons from minority groups, at

the expense of better understanding majority group members. This reminds us that all individuals are cultural agents, each possessing their own dispositions, constructions, and understandings that play a role in co-shaping intercultural interaction outcomes.

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